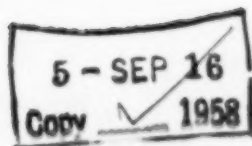


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OCT 28 1958



# The Literary Review

QUARTERLY / ONE DOLLAR / WINTER 1957-1958

## Editorial Notes

The series of features devoted to significant contemporary writers, initiated in the *Autumn Review* with Dr. William Carlos Williams, is continued in this number with two other physician-writers—Merrill Moore and Oliver St. John Gogarty. Neither of the current features is complete, for both men died before the planned material was in hand—Dr. Moore on September 20 and Dr. Gogarty September 22.

Merrill Moore was to contribute a group of poems, some letters, and an essay. Roy P. Basler of the Library of Congress had agreed to provide a critical estimate. His article arrived the Monday following Dr. Moore's death on Saturday. The prefatory note, subsequently added by Mr. Basler, clarifies the circumstances under which his article was completed, an article that acquires special interest since it was the last criticism of his writing that Dr. Moore read and to which he gave his blessing.

Dr. Gogarty was also assisting us in the preparation of a section to be devoted to his work. Professor Angoff in his notes recalls our last session along with an earlier meeting of his own with Dr. Gogarty:

"One of the few genuine writers I have ever known, who lived the literary life because it was the only life that made sense to him, who was, indeed, the very personification of the writer, was the late Dr. Gogarty. I actually knew him about five years and in that time met him infrequently, but on one occasion we saw each other every day for two consecu-

tive weeks, eating together, walking together, and always talking—the place was the Writers' Conference at the University of New Hampshire at Durham.

"Gogarty was already in his middle seventies then. But he walked erect—indeed, from a distance he looked like a legendary German lieutenant out for a brisk stroll. He had a Mephistophelian face, which toward the end of his life, when he was silent, seemed positively devilish. His eyes were hard and determined, looking ever forward, his nose was a trifle hooked, which added to the aura of sheer evil, and his jaw jutted out a little and was a trifle lopsided, and this too stamped him as at least Lucifer's trusted emissary on earth.

"But when he held forth—which was whenever his friends had enough sense to let him talk on and on and to supply him with proper liquid refreshments (chiefly beer toward the end) and long cigars—his face would become like that of a tomboy. His eyes would dance with mischief, his mouth would, so to speak, wait upon his eyes, and both would wait upon his tongue—for there would pour forth from him such talk as has seldom come from any writer of our time—gay, malicious, bitter, contradictory, kindly, lyrical, bawdy, tender, lusty, hilarious, vile, scandalous, considerate, scurrilous, deeply perceptive, irresistibly fascinating. . . .

"Insofar as I knew him, I would say he was a man of few deep personal loyalties—one day he would  
(continue inside back cover)

## Contributors

CHARLES ANGOFF, Managing Editor of the original *American Mercury* and later its Editor, is author, editor or co-editor of twenty-two books, including the recently published *H. L. Mencken: A Portrait from Memory and Something About My Father and Other People*, a collection of thirty-five short stories. He is a member of the English faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University.

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PHILIP BOOTH, Wellesley College, is the author of the book of poems, *Letter from a Distant Land* (Viking, 1957).

KENNETH BURKE comments that his article "is the somewhat 'irresponsibly' fanciful projection of an essay, 'The Seven Offices' (see January *Diogenes*), categorizing the social services that people do for one another and asking what natural motives underlie such activities. Here the same line of speculation is carried to the 'jumping off place' in a metaphysical fantasy that I somewhat incline to believe I may believe."

ALICE CADDY is the artist wife of the writer Ben Lucien Burman.

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## The Literary Review

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biographical study of the life and times of Arthur Dobbs, Governor of North Carolina (University of North Carolina Press, 1957).

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ROBERT HILLYER, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, has recently added *The Relic and Other Poems* (Knopf) to his many valued volumes. He will be the subject of an article in the Spring number of this *Review* by Winfield Townley Scott.

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ALFRED KREYMBORG's Lindsay-Hemingway sketches in this number of *The Literary Review* will appear as chapters in his updated

autobiography, *The New Troubadour*. The original *Troubadour* (1925) was recently reissued as a paperback. Mr. Kreymborg is author of some forty volumes of poetry, plays, prose, fiction, and several anthologies.

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LAWRENCE LIPTON's poetry and essays have appeared in many of the leading literary journals here and abroad. His book of poems, *Rainbow at Midnight*, was a Book Club for Poetry Selection (1955). His novels include *Brother, the Laugh is Bitter* and *In Secret Battle*.

CHARLES NORMAN is author of *The Muses Darling* (Marlowe), *So Worthy a Friend* (Shakespeare), and *The Genteel Murderer* (Thomas Griffiths Wainewright). He has in preparation a book about E. E. Cummings which Macmillan will publish this year.

ELI SIEGEL, in addition to *Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana: Poems* (1957), is author of *The Aesthetic Method in Self-Conflict* and *Psychiatry, Economics, Aesthetics*. His poetry, criticism and reviews have been published widely.

KAYE STARBIRD, Shelbourne, Vermont, writes serious verse. Under her other name, C. S. Jennison, she writes light verse. Both serious and light verse have had wide publication.



# THE LITERARY REVIEW

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OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

BY ALICE CADDY

## His Epitaph

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

Don't let death confuse you all:  
Death is not unusual.

# Oliver St. John Gogarty (1878-1957)

ROBERT HILLYER

IN A LETTER written to me four days before his death, Oliver Gogarty noted, "It was very hot here in August: 95 on a Monday and I passed out—I put it down to the heat as an excuse."

We know now that it was not merely the heat, that Gogarty was being warned of the heart attack that killed him a few weeks later. But he was not one to heed warnings at any time of his life.

He has left some of the finest poems of our times. His poems sing; they have the delicate music that the Irish have preserved from Elizabethan days, and, in addition, they have the turn of phrase, the epigrammatic value of each word, such as only a man deeply versed in the Classics could command. "He is one of the great lyric poets of our age," said Yeats. A city man, he was seldom in quest of

The Perfect, the Forbidden City,  
That's built—Ah, God knows where!

Therein he differed from many of his Irish compeers. His dreams of a transfigured Dublin were modest and within human achievement, culminating in

dwellings proportioned  
To what in the nation  
Is faithful and noble.

As for companions, he asked for no transcendent spirits, but accepted with gusto imperfect human substitutes for the eternal company.

In these friends and acquaintances he took such delight that from reminiscences of them he fashioned some of the most enchanting memoirs in literature. Beauty and laughter hang over his pages, through which move a varied assortment of characters seen with-

out reverence and without malice. The showmaster, Gogarty himself, is everywhere; his original and at times astonishing idiom bringing to life, like some magical incantation, the people who will live forever in his prose.

O Boys, the times I've seen!  
The things I've done and known!  
If you knew where I had been,  
Or half the joys I've had,  
You never would leave me alone . . .

No one who knew and loved Oliver Gogarty could leave him alone. Wherever he went he was a sought-after guest. This was not only owing to his learning, his wit, and his warmheartedness, but also to the fact that he had an old-fashioned courtesy and courtliness such as is seldom found any more.

I remember well his last Christmas visit to us on our hillside in Delaware. My wife and I both remarked that Oliver never changed. She had known him longer than I—eighteen years—and he appeared no older than when she first met him. It seemed impossible that we had helped him celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday three years before.

By some affinity of taste, he and I had much of the same poetry by heart. It was, for the most part, Elizabethan. We spent happy hours capping each other's quotations with ever increasing surprise that our private anthologies should be so similar. Then he would be off on his reminiscences again, story following story—never twice the same through all the years of our friendship.

The last morning of his stay, when we got up we could not find Oliver anywhere in the house. Presently there was a light knock at the door. It was a freezing cold morning, and there stood Oliver without any overcoat. He had gone out to sniff the early morning air, locked himself out, and for an hour had been pacing the frozen country road rather than deprive us of any sleep.

The dead seem almost nearer to us than they did in life. Our house has been vibrant with Oliver Gogarty's presence ever since his sudden leave-taking of the world. He will be with us until we join him where he is.

# Mr. Satterthwaite's Conversion

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

SOME FAMOUS MEN, Oliver Cromwell and Dr. Johnson for instance, had an inordinate fear of death. Naturally, we all fear death. Fear of death is a measure of the relish for life. Think of the reverse—what failures suicides are!

Mr. Satterthwaite, though not as famous as the men mentioned above, easily outdid them in their obsession. I will admit that he was helped in this by living in the age of advertisements. Cromwell was unaware of the respectability of funeral "parlors"; and Dr. Johnson was not coaxed into cremation by the cheerful glow of an open furnace. Mr. Satterthwaite suffered from both. One day inadvertently he took a bus. What did he see above the heads of the passengers opposite to him—an advertisement for vaults! That they were in a bank does not matter. The effect on Mr. Satterthwaite does. Beside it was another for Planter's cooking oil; and then, unabashed, one for a funeral parlor. So bad was Mr. Satterthwaite's obsession that he could not bear any hint of his last end. "Vault" suggested interment; and as for planter, he recognized in that (for he was a well-read man) a slang word for burial as in the song, "When we plant Matt Hannigan's aunt, we won't be too put out." To him the word "cooking" was less associated with domesticity than with cremation. And as for the last advertisement, we won't go into that. Suffice to say, he never entered a bus again.

Mr. Satterthwaite had purchased his apartment in a cooperative building. In it he kept books and bric-à-brac. It was his home. He began to fear that the district was not as fashionable as when he took up residence in it some years ago. His daily stroll to the avenue where he could hail a taxi gave him some visual evidence of some slight falling off in the social amenities of the place. The last straw or, to be exact, the second last straw was provided by the office of a mortician who had established himself right in front of the building in which Mr. Satterthwaite dwelt. He could not take his daily

walk nor at night could he rest because of a pink neon light which blinked in and out and admonished all and sundry to "Get Dead!" The pink glare pierced his window shades.

What could be done? Of course, he could move to another part of the city; but he had bought his apartment and was loath to leave. To pack all his bric-à-brac and perhaps to lose some in the moving was not to be thought of; it would be nothing less than an upheaval.

Mr. Satterthwaite had a brain wave: he would send his man of business, Mr. Shattock, to interview the mortician and prevail on him to remove the sign and, better still, himself to a less salubrious neighborhood.

Mr. Shattock was a shrewd man but, though he was shrewd, Mr. Satterthwaite always found him reliable and he regarded him as a Mentor, for his advice was sound and left no room for regret if it were followed.

Before calling, Mr. Shattuck went to considerable trouble to find out the mortician's name. That of the firm was written in large letters, "Loam Inc.," but the mortician's name was moot. At last, from a woman who worked in the building on the ground floor of which the funeral parlor was situated, Mr. Shattock learned that there were two partners one of whom was a Mr. Tuck. The name of the other was unknown to her; he was usually away at funerals or, rather, interments.

He called on the mortician by appointment. He met a suave little man with an extremely unctuous voice. His professional pose was touched by melancholy for his outlook on life appeared overcast. This was to be expected because life is the enemy of the mortician; and, though we are assured that in the midst of life we are in death, the latter is not as frequent as those who live by death wish. This is becoming somewhat confusing. It is likely to end in a paradox, so let us drop the subject and turn to Mr. Shattock's interview with Mr. Tuck.

When Mr. Shattock entered the office Mr. Tuck offered him a chair. He regretted that, owing to a temporary absence in the course of duty, his partner could not share the pleasure of making



Mr. Shattock's acquaintance. He inquired what he could do for Mr. Shattock and assured him that all the resources of the firm would be gladly put at his disposal. Mr. Shattock said, "I have come to see you about a friend."

Mr. Tuck bowed as one who would say "naturally" and sighed gently. "I am glad that it is not a relative."

Mr. Shattock, sensing cross purposes, hastened to say, "Not about a dead friend; but one who is alive. In fact, I have been instructed by him to call on you and to discuss this business of yours."

At the word "business" the manner of the mortician became sensibly cold. You would think that a spot of *rigor mortis* had set in so chilly was his reply:

"Before you go any further, I would have you know that ours is not a business—it is a profession."

Mr. Shattock was not slow to recognize that here was an Achilles heel. He decided to humor Mr. Tuck. "I beg your pardon." Mr. Tuck bowed. Mr. Shattock took the bow for an acceptance of his apology. He continued, "Surely in this profession of yours you must have had many moving experiences?" He was sorry that he had said "moving." Mr. Tuck might think that he was making his profession a butt for ridicule. It was too late to change it and it would never do to apologize twice.

Evidently Mr. Tuck, over-sensitive though he was, saw no concealed sarcasm in the word "moving," for he adopted it: "Moving," he exclaimed, "I should say I have had. I can give you an instance that occurred only the day before yesterday. You remember that accident on the Elevated? Well, we had a basket case. All I had was a few photographs of the poor fellow and 168 pounds of wax. He was well-known to my partner who unfortunately was away in the country, so I had to rebuild him all alone. I worked for 35 hours on end without a let-up. The relations and friends were already filling up the parlor. You know how diffident an artist feels before an exhibition? I was about to admit the relatives when in comes my partner—and this I consider the peak point of my artistic career—I turned to my partner and pointed to my handiwork. "What do you think of that?" I asked. My partner went over to the

casket and stretched out a hand, 'Speak to me, George!' My heart leapt up! Art, as the poet said, is its own exceeding great reward."

At that moment the door opened and a tall, merry-eyed, red-faced man in a black frock coat, black kid gloves and a tall silk hat entered the room. He took no notice of Mr. Shattock. "That's that," he said and went over to the window breathing relief. Mr. Tuck called, "Let me introduce you to Mr. Shattock. Mr. Shattock, this is my partner, Mr. Ashe."

"Pleased to meet you," said Mr. Ashe, "excuse my gloves," as he extended his hand. "I'll be out of uniform in a moment."

He left the room and returned quickly without hat, gloves or frock coat. Instead he wore a light alpaca sports' coat of grayish blue. He had doffed his manner with his "uniform." He was in a merry mood.

"The \$250 at Woodlawn and the \$600 with canopy. The one at Trinity is still to be checked—well over a thousand bucks a day. I could do with a boiler-maker. Where's the bourbon?"

Apparently the question was not rhetorical, for Mr. Ashe returned to the window and, lifting the window seat, produced a bottle and two glasses which he placed on a table. "Tuck, we'll want a third tumbler."

When Mr. Tuck found a third tumbler, Mr. Ashe proceeded to pour the bourbon into the glasses with an experienced hand. At the third glass he turned to Mr. Shattock and asked solicitously, "Say when." When the glass was about half full Mr. Shattock nodded. Mr. Ashe handed him the glass, "Neat or on the rocks?" Mr. Shattock asked if there were a chaser. Mr. Ashe went to the window and produced a can of beer. He tossed off his liquor while his partner was toying with his.

"We are giving a dinner on Saturday with a client in the chair. Perhaps you could join us. Couldn't Mr. Shattock join us, Tuck?"

"By all means, by all means. Nothing could give us greater pleasure." Then he added seemingly as an afterthought, "I am sure."

There must have been an ice box under the window for when Mr. Ashe politely opened the can for Mr. Shattock the beer in it was cold.

"That's settled then. Here's mud in your eye."

Mr. Shattock winced at the toast. While the mood was cheerful he thought he would broach the subject of his visit:

"I am representing a Mr. Satterthwaite," he said.

"Bring him along; bring him along! The more the merrier, eh, Tuck?" Mr. Tuck inclined his head until it reached the rim of his glass.

"Does your friend play or sing?" Mr. Ashe inquired. Mr. Shattock shook his head.

"A pity, a pity. Perhaps he can recite?"

The thought of Mr. Satterthwaite reciting at a mortician's musicale was overwhelming. Caution fell from Mr. Shattock. He laughed immoderately.

Mr. Ashe took the laughter for an assurance of Mr. Satterthwaite's power as a reciter: "I suppose he can give us 'I learned about women from her'? Talking about women, you should have seen the blonde at the second interment. None of your jokes, Tuck, about an Ashe blonde. She was all in black. She must have been the daughter of the dear departed. She was too young to have been his wife. She was under the canopy nearest the grave. I'll check on her when I get through with my arrears of home work," Mr. Ashe announced.

When Mr. Shattock entered the large cellar under the mortuary parlor the "band" was in full swing. Every musician played on some sort of bottle, jar or jug which he used as a wind instrument by blowing into it. One or two used ash trays for cymbals. The din was terrific. Mr. Ashe stood behind an improvised bar and kept the musicians lubricated. He hailed Mr. Shattock with "Where's your friend?" Mr. Shattock explained that owing to a slight indisposition his friend was unable to attend. The fact was that Mr. Shattock had resolved not to inform Mr. Satterthwaite of the result of his interview until he had something definite to report.

"Indisposition? That's bad. What height is your friend?" Mr. Ashe asked.

Mr. Shattock who failed to see the connection said, "About your height."

"That would be six feet and half an inch in my stockinged feet. Weight 210 pounds."

The place continued to fill. Mr. Ashe was kept busy behind the bar. An old gentleman entered. One or two of the musicians began to cheer. Mr. Shattock found Mr. Tuck and asked who the newcomer was.

"That's our chairman tonight. He is well over seventy. He had a lot of money at one time but he spent it all on mink and nylons. Now he is reduced to travelling for a stocking factory. He says that he does not regret it one bit. If he had his money back, he'd spend it the same way again. He insured himself long ago for a \$3,000 funeral and he is engaging us. Ashe is presenting him with a gold pencil at the dinner. You must meet Mr. Kinsey."

The band blared again. Mr. Kinsey greeted his host behind the bar. He was handed something in a glass.

Mr. Shattock sat beside Mr. Ashe. Mr. Kinsey had the place of honor at the first table-head. Mr. Shattock looked at the second table but not too closely for he wished to smother the suspicion that it was a trestle. On Mr. Shattock's left were two policemen in plain clothes, one of whom invited Mr. Shattock to a pistol competition which would be held at the barracks in the following week.

"If my book is out next week we'll all go," Mr. Ashe announced. Mr. Shattock was interested. He inquired what was the subject of the book.

"What do you think?" Mr. Ashe asked winking. "I call it *After Death . . . What?* If that isn't an intriguing title, I'll eat my hat."

Mr. Shattock ventured to say that there might be some misunderstanding—the religiously inclined might buy it for curiosity. When the contents, which he took to deal with interments, were disclosed, Mr. Ashe might find himself in trouble.

"*After Death . . . What?* Why a decent funeral, of course! I have no religious scruples. Anyhow, I don't want to take sides. I have my job to do, ain't that enough?"

"I don't know how you find time to write," Mr. Shattock said impressed.

"Write?" said Mr. Ashe. "I only provided the title. My pub-

lishers do the rest." Somebody, probably Mr. Tuck, rapped on the table; Mr. Kinsey was about to speak.

The old gentleman at the head of the first table rose. His voice was feeble, but as he spoke it gathered volume. He raised his champagne glass:

"Don't take my toast amiss. I know that I am in the eyes of Loam, Inc. a case of delayed burial. Nevertheless, here's to our next merry meeting. Then, ashes to Ashe."

Prolonged cheers and laughter followed Mr. Kinsey's speech. The musicians who were assembled at the second table cheered loudest.

Mr. Ashe, still laughing, rose and struck his glass for silence. He held a gold pencil in its case.

"Gentlemen, my friends, I have here a present from our firm to one of its firmest supporters. I have known Mr. Kinsey these many years. As you are aware, it is not often that we have the opportunity to talk to one of our customers beforehand; and I am sure that none of you would like to talk to one of them afterwards. Mr. Kinsey, I am glad to say, though I say it myself, is far from being a ghost. Mr. Kinsey, on behalf of Loam, Inc. I present you with this gold pencil with the hope that you will not use it to write your memoirs which are known to us all (more or less) and which are the envy of the old and a caution to the young—Mr. Kinsey!"

With raised glasses all stood and drank to the oldest man in the room.

When Mr. Shattock saw Mr. Satterthwaite he had more than a missionary's task to accomplish. He had not only to cure him of his obsession but to convert him. No easy thing to do, but it would not be said of him that he had failed because of lack of enterprise.

"Not only did I see the two partners of the firm but I dined with them." Mr. Shattock decided that shock tactics were the best approach.

Mr. Satterthwaite regarded his agent with suspicion. Had he betrayed him? Fraternization with the enemy looked very like it.

"I dined with them," Mr. Shattock continued, "and I came to this conclusion: they have found a means of making the common

enemy work for them. They make death pay. They have as it were blunted his scythe—or what have you? Behind the black glass of their office window there is revelry and joy. I never had a more amusing time than when I went under the parlor to an extensive cellar, to a dinner that was given in honor of a valued and prospective customer. I am bold enough to suggest that you put some money into the firm, obtain if possible a controlling interest, become a partner and get out once and for all of the state of fear which every suggestion of mortality puts you into. Take your courage in both hands. I have asked the partners if they required capital; what money they have invested is increasing a hundred fold. I am joining them. I advise you to do likewise. Put your money into a mortuary and make death pay. Get behind it, drive it in front of you. And as for your art—your artistic nature will not be blighted. There is wax to be sculpted into the resemblance of flesh. There is death to be made lifelike—what more is the aim of art?"

And that is why if you care to cross the city, you can read on a discreet pane of dark glass, "Ashe, Tuck, Satterthwaite and Shattock, Morticians." There is no neon light, only the words "After Death . . . What?" in golden letters on a background of black.

## The Ill Wind Inn

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

See if you can read the signboard  
Of this ruined public house;  
And then gaze at the half timbered,  
Gabled stories roofed in moss:  
Here the King and Tanner parted—  
Manners in those days were slack—  
Hence, his banner retroverted;  
Hence, THE ILL WIND INN this shack.



# Rhythm

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

By rhythm the gods are bound;  
The Fates in its skein are noosed;  
The soul is kin to sound  
And first by sound was loosed.

THE DANCE is one of the oldest of the arts and the most intimate because it is done with the body just as the shell is secreted by the fish. The origin of the dance is joy. It comes from the exuberance of life itself and is one with its fruition and its waste. It is internal, not external as painting, architecture and sculpture are. It is rhythm in its purest form. It is all gesture. And the chant that accompanies the dance is gesture too, though the gesticulations of the tendons that make sound are concealed by the muscles of the throat. From the word *chant* comes *enchantment* because the rhythms of the dance and song were used as an enchantment to alter destiny and give the future a favorable trend—in fact, to bend the neck of fate.

It is not without significance that the prophetess of the Delphic oracle uttered her equivocal prophecies in the most rhythmic of all verse, the hexameter, which, perfected later, became the most majestic form of human speech. If there were no rhythm, there would have been nothing prophetic in her utterance. Rhythm holds to the present day. That is why poetry is still revered and why it lingers on somewhere or other, no matter how apparently nationalized the world seems to be.

There is enchantment in the rhythm of lines and the rhythm of letters—in the lines such as, "Astarte, Queen of Heaven with crescent horns." Or in "Daffodils / That come before the swallow dares, and take / The winds of March with beauty." And in the collect, "Through the chances and changes of this mortal life bring us to where true joy is only to be found." Or, more recently, in the

line, "Arise and shine upon the Aral sea."

The solemnity of the rhythm and the cadence are apparent to all with an ear to hear. Without it there can be no poetry for, as the line above implies, there can be no enlargement of the soul without measured sound.

Music, to our Western ears, consists of the rhythmic combinations of tones; otherwise, it would be cacophony. Without harmony it cannot be related to the universal frame. So it is with architecture and with sculpture. There is that within us which rebels on seeing a house that is unshapely, a house too high for its width. An angular statue offends the eye. It has ceased to flow. According to the dictionary, rhythm is derived from the Greek word *rheo*, which means to flow.

We are inclined to call the people of old "primitive" and to attribute a foolish belief in magic to their acts. If in their ritual dances they sought by imitative action to be one with the great Flux, can we say that they were foolish after all, seeing that everything flows and alters? What were they doing but attempting to interpret and to accept the will of God and approach Him by that acceptance? "In whose will is our peace," so Dante said; and who would accuse him of being foolish?

There is rhythm in the most unexpected places. The molecular weight of the elements seems to be equated to an arithmetical progression, though mathematics is one thing and the elements have an existence of their own. Yet the moment they cease to obey some rhythm set for them by the mathematicians, something is felt to be wanting: another element is postulated and discovered. So it is with the planets. Adams in the middle of the last century noticed a slight aberration in the orbit of Neptune and this led to the discovery of Uranus. Something was found to be arrhythmical and it was corrected by a discovery of a world. There is rhythm everywhere in Nature, so the people we call primitive were not so silly after all. Disharmony is not in the stars but in ourselves. As an example of imitative magic—that is, where the dance is used to obtain something desirable from Nature—the best demonstration occurs in the dance for rain at Cochiti which the Indians perform every year. As the great American poet, Witter Bynner, has it in

his poem, "Rain," this line explains itself, "And in and out them soft and slow / The women moved the way things grow." And then down comes the rain and freshens the unyielding earth. The recurrence of the seasons has a rhythm of its own; so too has the wind but we cannot comprehend that because we have but one segment of the arc, as it were, before us, and we cannot see the wider plan.

Charm is rhythm at its highest. It cannot be defined; but everyone feels and knows when it is present. It is infectious: the beholder soon partakes of it and is filled with a sense of well-being or of blessedness. He or she becomes a partaker of the universal harmony. I hope that it will never be broken down by analysis. It is enough for us to feel the affinity with the universal which it can produce. Perhaps it is not too much to say that beauty comes from co-ordination and that ugliness is the result of a lack of rhythm. I cannot prove this; but nevertheless who among us does not feel that there is a wrong in unsightly things? If you endeavor to reduce this to logic, it will lead to rationalization and to abstract thinking; and you cannot have rhythm in the abstract; that is, without something on which it may act.

I had a vision which should be a warning to me not to try to philosophise too much. In my vision I saw all the docks of the world on which were stevedores handling bales and crates that were not there. They had the rhythm of labor without the work. I was about to inform certain labor unions when my vision expanded to include all sorts of workers: dentists began to extract teeth with no one in the chair; waiters rushed about empty restaurants; conductors waved their batons frantically at orchestras that had not turned up; jockeys urged on invisible horses; advertisers advertised non-existent goods; literary agents pushed books that were not even written by a ghost writer and in this visionary city there were cops on point duty in no-way streets. That's what comes from being too abstract and abstruse.

Seeing that rhythm cannot be abstracted from its subject, it may be no harm to enquire what is in us that is offended by an ugly or an awkward thing. Why should the elements, the seasons, the planets in their courses and man and woman have within them

something of the early dance? You will say that it is because there is rhythm at the base of all things in Nature. True; that is all I want. What is within us that tells us that everything flows? You see to what all this is leading. Beware of Philosophy. On with the dance!

## Poems by Oliver St. John Gogarty

### Good Luck

Nobody knows from whence it comes;  
But all men know that it's impartial.  
Men of the trumpets and the drums,  
Arrows and shot and all things martial,  
Because they once men's lives controlled  
Are chosen first, like Alexander,  
Cæsar and Ghengis who enrolled  
Embattled ranks and war's grim splendour;  
These were Good Luck's embodiment,  
Despite the fact that Good Luck left them  
Before their end, as if 'twere meant  
To mock them ere it had bereft them.  
Give me, though far from famous, men  
Who, though not necessarily, were plucky  
Or even rich, I'll give you then:  
"It's better to be born lucky."

## The Isles of Greece<sup>1</sup>

Silent Sailorman attend  
Ere you reach your journey's end!  
By your walk and wad I ween  
You have in the Navy been;  
Though it makes but few cry, "Cave!"  
Tell me of the Grecian Navy.  
Tell me have you seen the sea grow  
Darker down by Montenegro?  
Are there really now in loads  
Rhododendrons grown in Rhodes?  
Have you seen the isle Calypso  
Lived in when she got the slip so?

But the Sailor turned to me  
With an aspect like the sea  
When against some rocky strait  
It must need expectorate,  
With, "I don't give (pardon please)  
A damn for all the Isles of Greece."

Then I shouted, "Let me greet you  
Sailor, I have longed to meet you.  
I have longed for one of these  
Health-restoring heresies,  
For it seems so very funny  
Why the people waste their money  
Seeking Plato, Paul and Pilate  
On each ordinary islet:  
Searching for heroic spooks  
On excursions run by Cook's.  
Now your words lay bare of myths  
Ionian thallatoliths."

<sup>1</sup>This poem was inspired by the announcement of the Poetry Society of America, of which Dr. Gogarty was a member, that it would sponsor a tour of the isles and mainland of Greece during the Summer of 1957.

## Why

I watched the constellated towers  
Tier upon tier in azure hung;  
Below where windows filled with flowers,  
And streets bemedded by dogs' dung.

Why should the minds that build in air  
Broad and unbounded as the skies,  
Condemn the straining dogs to bear  
A life that turns the streets to sties?

## A Wish

I wish I had within my grip  
The inventor of the pneumatic drill;  
I'd take good care it did not slip  
Till I had shoved it up, until  
It reached a spot under his hat  
And drowned his screams with its RAT TAT.

## And No Farther

Millions of Americans  
Sitting in their living rooms  
Talking frantic politics or simply chewing gum;  
Millions of Americans  
Waiting for the millenniums  
Just around the corner, and as far as they can come.



## Coming From the Movies

The palm-ringed shores in high relief,  
Below them, shadows green and dim;  
The long white thunder on the reef;  
The pool where rainbow fishes swim:

And then the reasty, raucous street,  
The noise that throngs and shakes the air;  
The chewing gum beneath the feet;  
The colored taxis everywhere.

## A Whodunit Who Didn't

If I could find a Whodunit who didn't  
Have all its cops stupid and all overweight;  
Its private detectives by alcohol riddled  
And all its blondes lovely and—well—passionate;  
If I could find a Whodunit who didn't  
Have pages where telephones went ting-a-ling,  
If I could find a Whodunit who didn't:  
Do you think for a moment I'd read the damn thing?

## The Subway—Rush Hour

To reach the doors was such a strain  
Against the people landing.  
It was a very crowded train:  
Even *men* were standing.

## The Wondrous Ties of Bartenders

The wondrous ties of bartenders  
Can take you fast and far  
From where the folk of both genders  
Sit hunched about the bar;  
And you can sail on greenish seas  
In yachts with purple sails  
Where all beyond the slanting trees  
Is innocent of gales.  
But, oh, what tropic storms arise  
When all the sea awakes  
And lifts in foam and multiplies  
If one a cocktail shakes!  
Then waves arise and swirl around  
And every palm tree dips,  
While, forced to fly each puffing sound,  
The sea is cleared of ships.  
Then there are geometric ties  
With lozenges and squares;  
And ties with birds and butterflies;  
But none of these compares  
With ties by the Abstractionists,  
For, if you gaze therein,  
They will abstract with subtile twists  
The alcohol from gin;  
And you must say, "The Same Again"  
And say it o'er and o'er  
Until you leave all upright men  
And sink upon the floor.  
Pink, yellow, blue and greenery—  
Oh, Silver-shaking guys,  
If you would stick to scenery,  
I'd praise you for your ties.

# Mortimer

CHARLES ANGOFF

I IMAGINE I am the only person in the family who has not harbored any ill feeling toward Mortimer, and who, indeed, has had warm feelings for him—though, in all honesty, I must add that I have not had the courage really to defend him before my brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles. Not that I condone what he has done; he has really done some shabby things. But the quality of his deeds, both evil and not so evil, and the general aroma of his personality, I confess, have attracted me. I liked him even when, as a very young boy, I hardly knew of his transgressions, and if I had known I would not have thought them “bad.” He dressed more neatly than all my other relatives, near or distant. His voice had a fine timbre. He had a round, but not fat, face, and there was something very kindly and very happy about his smile.

Most of my relatives had long faces, a little inclined toward the sad. But not Mortimer. He was never sad. And I liked his “democratic” manner, that is, I felt drawn toward him because he talked to me, in those years, with the same courtesy he used in talking to my parents. He didn’t change suddenly when talking to me, as some of the other relatives did. He did not condescend toward the young. Young and old were alike to him—and that is something which the young always appreciate far more than most older folk realize. He also was always clean shaven, which made him look very distinguished in my eyes. Those of my relatives who did shave, did so only two or three times a week and looked a trifle offensive most of the rest of the week.

Then there was something else about him that thrilled my boyish heart. He always seemed to be coming from the highlands, so to speak. Sometimes he went to Keith’s Orpheum, on Tremont Street in Boston, which, at the time, was the theatre of the wealthy and intellectually élite. It cost fifty cents to buy a seat even in the balcony—a very stiff price for those days. Not one of my relatives

went to Keith's except Mortimer. How he did it I didn't understand at the time. Mortimer also loved baseball and was a fan of the Red Sox. This made him a real American in my eyes. My father would ask him, "What is there to see? Grown people carry a stick in their hands, hit a ball, and run. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. Isn't there something better they can find to do?" Mortimer would smile and say, "It's the American game, baseball. It's exciting, goes right to the blood. Sitting there on a nice seat, eating a hot dog and drinking Moxie or seltzer, that's the life!"

Mortimer was Mottel's oldest child—and Mottel was my mother's oldest and favorite uncle on her mother's side. Mottel had helped the rest of the family come to America. He owned a prosperous soda-and-candy store, he was vice-president of one of the wealthiest synagogues in Boston, and he was one of the leading Jews in the city. But as often happens with such "holy vessels," he had trouble with his children, particularly with Mortimer, his oldest, who, he had hoped, would also grow up to be a prominent person in Boston Jewish circles. The first thing Mortimer did that annoyed Mottel was to change his name from Morris to Mortimer. Mottel couldn't understand it. "Well, Mortimer isn't so Jewish as Morris," said the young man. "You have to think of such things."

This shocked Mottel. "Why be ashamed of being Jewish?" he asked, but he could not budge his son. In time Mottel got accustomed to the name of Mortimer, since other young Morris in the West End had made the same change. But by then Mottel had other worries concerning Mortimer: he spent more time in the settlement house gym than at Hebrew school; he went to more baseball games on the Boston Common than to addresses by lay preachers in the synagogue; he refused to study Talmud after his *bar-mitzvah*; he went almost every week to the Olympic Theatre in Bowdoin Square, where he saw three features every Saturday morning for ten cents—and sometimes he stayed on to see the three features all over again; he greased his hair; he liked to have ice cream sodas not at his father's store but at more elegantly appointed "ice-cream parlors"; and he already had a string of girls eagerly chasing him. Sometimes Mortimer would be seen walking down the street with a half dozen girls around him and all obviously hungry for his attention. "Out

of this no good can come," said Mottel to himself.

Mottel hoped that once Mortimer got a job he would change, "become a man with responsibilities, and once he gets married he will pray to be away from women." It was a long time, however, before Mortimer got a job. He ostensibly helped his father for some six years after his graduation, but he actually spent more time with the girls who came to have sodas and sat around for hours finishing their sodas—just to listen to his stories and merely look at him. Mottel suspected that not many of the girls paid for their sodas. That he didn't mind so much, but he resented their occupying seats for so long. Most of all he worried what would become of Mortimer, for he clearly was not interested in the soda-candy-store business. Finally Mottel did get him a job as a salesman for a dress factory, and to his great pleasure Mortimer seemed to go for selling like the proverbial duck to water.

Mortimer could now be the "spiffy dresser" to his heart's content. He had an expense account, he could go to the best restaurants, and he could take out women buyers. He did so well in Boston that his employer asked him whether he wouldn't be glad to go "out on the road"—to Worcester, Springfield, New York, Chicago, St. Louis. Mortimer's delight knew no bounds. The farther away from Boston he went the better. He was well liked by the department store buyers in all the cities he visited, and his sales mounted and mounted. Above all, there were the women and the girls. In New York and Chicago and St. Louis and Cleveland, as in Boston, they had difficulty resisting him. He seemed to be the ideal of all of them. He loved glitter and warmth and laughter and the softness of eager kisses and the slow delight of caresses. He liked expensive restaurants and shows, the sort of high life he had seen depicted in the ten cent movies that he had seen as a boy.

There was one girl in New York who interested him particularly. Hortense Belkin was slim and dark and very bashful and subdued in her speech. When Mortimer first saw her in the book-keeping department of a New York department store he was immediately smitten. At first she refused to go out with him because by then he had become known as "fast," but he eventually prevailed upon her to go with him to dinner and the theatre. Apparently she

sensed something kindly and tender in him, for thereafter he didn't have to ask her to see him. They quickly became engaged, and Mortimer proudly brought her to his father's house. My father and his family were also invited to the big reception.

It was one of the most unforgettable occasions of my life as a boy in Boston. Here was glamour incarnate. Here was a man of the world come home with the woman of his choice. Here was a woman of sublime beauty and gentleness—"Like a flower she is," said my father—and from the mysterious New York. Mortimer was real ultimate Americanism to me. He was manhood at its finest.

The newly married couple took an apartment in Myrtle Street, on the outskirts of the West End slums. Mortimer prevailed upon his employer to let him sell in Boston "at least until my wife and I get acquainted." The employer let him do as he wished. "You are our best salesman, Mortimer. What do I care where you sell? Boston, New York, Chicago, as long as you get the orders. My other salesmen should do half your business!" In time Hortense gave birth to a son. Mortimer was very happy and it seemed to everybody that he had "settled down."

But soon rumors began to spread that Mortimer was seen with "other women." And a bit later there were rumors that Mottel was shouting at his son for this. I once overheard my father say that he had heard that Mottel had threatened to disinherit Mortimer if he didn't stop being unfaithful to Hortense. To which my mother said, "Ah, how can a man do such a thing to any wife—and to such a diamond of a woman like Hortense? And she keeps such a clean house and takes such wonderful care of the child. There isn't a speck of dust anywhere. I can't understand."

But when Hortense had another child, a daughter, the rumors about Mortimer subsided, and for a few months he again seemed to be the perfect husband and father. My father, who didn't like to harbor any ill feelings toward anybody and who instinctively labeled as untrue whatever ill report was made about people he knew, said, "Nu, it only shows again how unjust people can be. I saw Mortimer only yesterday afternoon, with his wife and two children, on the way to the Boston Common. They all seemed so happy, especially Hortense. How people can make up stories!



Gossip-mongering is a sin, all the rabbis say it."

Yet, the rumors revived not long after. And soon it was learned that Mortimer was the father of an illegitimate child and had been supporting the child and its mother for several months now. My father could not doubt the truth of the news any more. It appeared in the newspapers: the mother had complained to the court that Mortimer had skipped several payments to her child and herself, and she was asking for a proper order from the court. Mottel and Baasel, his wife, were beside themselves with shame. So, to a lesser extent, of course, were others in the family, but no one said anything to Mottel or Baasel. What Hortense thought no one knew. For several weeks she did not appear at any family gatherings. When she finally did, it was in the company of Mortimer, and to all outward appearances, as some one said, they were "like young love birds." But Leah, my grandmother, thought differently. She said, "It should only happen to the drunken wife of a Russian hooligan the way Hortense is suffering. I can see the tears every time she smiles. Ah, that such a thing should happen to Mottel's son, his oldest!"

When Mottel gave up the soda-and-candy store and opened up a dress factory of his own, he asked Mortimer to come in with him and to be his chief salesman. Mottel thought that thus he could keep an eye on his son and make him behave. But again Mottel was wrong. Mortimer was seen with woman buyers all over Boston and he also was seen with some of the girls in his father's own factory. I once overheard Mottel and my father discussing Mortimer; of course, Mottel started the conversation, and my father, as usual with him in such situations, hardly said anything. "I just don't understand him, Moshe," said Mottel. "I don't. After all, I'm a man, too. I'm not made of wood, either. Men are men. But men get older and responsible. After all, how long can such things go on? How long can one be young? Ah! I told this to Mortimer, I asked him, I pleaded with him. And what do you think he says? A fool he isn't, and he is well spoken, and with me he is honest—at least he was when I talked to him that time. What do you think he said?"

"What?"

"What? I'm almost ashamed to tell you."

"Maybe you shouldn't tell me, Mottel. It makes you suffer."

"I'll tell you, Moshe. From you I don't have to hide anything. I haven't even told Baasel. So listen. Mortimer said he just can't get over the attraction of women—their smell, their sweetness, their—how did he say it?—their soft sweetness, I think that's what he said. And he said they lose it after a while, after he has known them, and he must go on to another. He said without women his life is nothing. *Nu*, so that's what he said. I don't understand. So I said to him, if you learn that women lose their softness after a while, why do you keep on going after them? So he said he knows. He has thought of it himself, and he is puzzled by it. So I asked him doesn't he know what he is doing to Hortense? So he said he knows, and he is terribly sorry. He said he loves Hortense and the children, and he wished there was a way he could do what he is doing without Hortense being hurt, but he can't. Moshe, I'm his father, and I want to think well of my Mortimer, of course, but believe me, I looked at him as he spoke this way, and I do think he means what he says, I mean, I do think he is suffering, he is worried, I do think that he really is not bad. Ah, such a *meshugaas* should strike a son of mine, and my oldest! In my old age I should yet have this on my mind!"

When Mottel's firm failed, some members of the family at large blamed it on Mortimer, and said so to Mottel. Mottel denied it. He said, "My factory failed because I'm not a business man. Mortimer is a good salesman, one of the best." Mortimer had a hard time getting a new job, since conditions in Boston were generally bad. Hortense had a third child, and that and Mortimer's unemployment kept him home for a while. But then he began going to "the market" more often, and once again people saw him with other women—and it began to be rumored that he was again the father of an illegitimate child, but that was never confirmed.

In time he did get a job as a salesman for a large dress factory. He traveled as far as Chicago, and quickly it became clear that Mortimer had not changed. But his affairs had become so many and such stale news in the family at large that they caused little

comment. Whenever relatives thought of him, they merely considered him one of the family skeletons. It was there, there was no sense in denying its existence, but neither was there any sense in deliberately bringing it up before strangers or in being too perturbed about it in the family circle.

It was thought that when Mortimer reached late middle age he would forget all his *narishkeiten*. It was also thought that as his children grew older—he now had four children, the oldest going to high-school—he would change his ways, if only to protect the good name of the family, especially the daughters. But Mortimer remained Mortimer. He only became a little more discreet. Few people now saw him with other women in Boston, but there were reports that he had been seen with women in such neighboring places as Swampscott, Lynn, Lowell, and Salem.

I would see him now and then on Washington Street. For some reason or other he always greeted me. Once in a while he would ask me to have a coffee with him. He was fond of my parents and tried to show it by being courteous to me. As always, he seemed self-possessed, he was neatly attired, he was cleanly shaven, there was the eternal stick-pin in his tie, and he smoked the best cigarettes. His hair was getting a bit thin and there was considerable gray in it, yet his eyes were young and his smile was the same warm and happy smile that I first saw and admired so much in my boyhood. His shirts generally had French sleeves, and his cuff links were of gold. He also smelled a bit of lavender. Altogether an impressive and very appealing figure. I found myself wishing he would ask me to spend a whole afternoon with him—on a picnic or some trip. I was sure he would be delightful company: carefree, generous, and playful.

At the time I was trying to get a job on a newspaper. I told him so, and he said, "I wish you do. I know you will. It must be very exciting to work on a newspaper. See all those people, be everywhere. I wish I could help you, but I don't know anybody on newspapers." These words coming from almost anybody else would have been perfunctory, but coming from Mortimer they seemed so heartfelt that I felt good all over. He asked me to give his regards to my father and mother, and again I felt that he was

not being merely polite. He was clearly a man of good feeling.

The other day, when I was visiting a sister in Boston, his name came up again. I had not seen him for years, and I asked about him. All his children were grown up now; two were married. Hortense was still with him. "She is one in a million," said somebody. "What she had to put up with!"

Somebody else said, "How can anyone with self respect, any woman who thinks anything of herself, have tolerated all his messiness—ugh, it makes me shiver all over. But I admit Hortense looks wonderful in spite of everything."

Apparently, Mortimer was still pretty much what he had been—though on a much smaller scale, of course. He was now vice-president of a large dress factory and did only occasional selling to the big department stores. He was seen having lunch more than once with a relatively young buyer in one of the fancier women's shops on Tremont street. Some of the people at my sister's couldn't understand what any young girl or any woman whatsoever could see in "such a man." I kept silent. I am ashamed I did, for I should have said a word in behalf of the man for whom I have had a secret admiration over so many years. Perhaps the reason why I didn't say anything is that I don't quite understand why I do like him. Anyway, I do like his romantic flair, and I can't forget the kindly, dancing devil in his eyes. I hope someday soon I meet him again and we have another coffee together.

# The Fourth Hand

MYLA JO CLOSSER

THE MONGOOSE, having killed the snake for the edification of those at lunch on the hotel balcony, jumped headforemost back into the fakir's bag—bored, blasé, glad to get out of the lime-light. The fakir was holding up the raw ends of the severed snake to whet the tiffin appetite. Nesta turned her eyes away and let them rest on the circle of Parsee ladies at the round table, whose dipping, swaying heads draped in gold-bordered saris of green, saffron, garnet and turquoise, were like so many brilliant macaws. Their fat host was genial, beaming; it was a free and sociable party.

About the balcony, Hindu husbands ate alone, their women-folk keeping to their rooms; at other tables sat dowdy English matrons and maids. Not a well-dressed Occidental in sight, except the wives of the American engineers. The season was just beginning.

The bar-boy brought Nesta's *chota peg* and inquired for Sahib's progress as he had done every day of her husband's long illness.

"Really better, Fernandez." Her own words sounded to Nesta too good to be true.

Six weeks before, she had landed in India to find Fleming, who had come from the hills to meet her, in the first stages of enteric. Nightmares followed. But he was "really better" now.

The handsome Eurasian woman, who appeared every day in a new costume, trailed by in a sari of silver and amethyst tissue and absurd Parisian shoes. She was a mystery—an improper one, Nesta felt sure—no one ever spoke to her. Behind her, the apologetic figure of the bald vice-consul was making its way toward Nesta.

"What's the good word, Mrs. Fleming?"

The gray eyes lit clear-shining lamps with her answer: "He's to be propped up for an hour. Soon we can get him up to the bungalow."

"That's fine," said the vice-consul. "He'll get well quicker in the hills." He sat down.

He enjoyed Mrs. Fleming's society and admired her, having seen her through her hard initiation into India. Her frail fading beauty appealed to his Virginian chivalry.

"You've a friend in town," the vice-consul remarked, after ordering Scotch and soda.

"Oh, who?"

"A lady who came for her mail at the consulate was asking about you today."

"Someone just landed, then. I don't know a soul in India."

"No—down from Poona, I gathered. What was the name—Roper? No—wait a moment. I jotted it down. I've got it somewhere." He drew out an untidy memorandum book.

Above the sea-wall, the kites had gathered for their afternoon manoeuvres—teeter and soar, glide and volplane against the snakey-striped harbor water. Many hours Nesta had spent at the sickroom window, watching and envying them.

"Here it is," said the vice-consul. "Reaper—a Mrs. Angeline Reaper."

Nesta gathered all the nerve-ends of her body in a grip not to betray the shock of that mild mouthing of syllables. Her hand blindly groping struck the glass of Scotch and soda—she clasped it and, by an effort of the will which made the sweat drip down to her waist, she raised it untrembling to her lips.

"I don't know the name. Some acquaintance of Harry's, I suppose." In a more impressive woman her nonchalance would have been superb.

The little vice-consul mopped his Shakespearean brow. "It's hot for December." He must have been mistaken in his momentary fear that Mrs. Fleming was upset about something.

Out on the Apollo Bunder, the stone masons began again the clink-clink of their hammers on the slowly rising Gateway to India. The buffalo which mixed the mortar ambled in his little orbit.

The fishing boats were coming in. It was near morning and turning a little cool but black as midnight still. The harbor light-house burned green. The mast lanterns of the fishing fleet moved hitchily toward the dock. Creak—creak—creak. The oarlocks



sounded like the breathing of a croupy child. Nesta stood at the window staring out at them.

Every sixty seconds the unticking electric clock on the wall rasped a minute into the discard. Lynn—Reaper—in India—Lynn—Reaper—in India— She had heard it all night.

It confirmed everything! And Harry had said that his acceptance of a commission which took him to the other side of the world should be proof to his wife that her jealous accusations were groundless.

She had been glad to have him go—far from that sphere of persistent pursuit. Charming, vain, irresistible and unresisting Harry to whom Nesta, the physical coward and scruple-ridden Puritan, had nothing to offer, except an unspectacular devotion, against vitality and adventuring youth.

Yet he had seemed glad to have her join him—eager at the last—and had welcomed her with a kind of mad joy. But that of course had been the fever. The fever which had erased the old trouble between them and given him back to her to care for and to save!

And she had saved him. Doctors and nurses conceded that. When life seemed slipping from his indifferent hold, she had sat for hours, his hand in hers, urging the tired pulse to persevere. And she thought she had won back more than his life in this fight.

Yet Lynn Reaper was in India and doubtless had been all the months of Nesta's loneliness at home.

In the arcade under the window, the consumptive beggars began to wake and cough. Dawn was near, and soon the molten red of the sun would spread like lava on the crest of gray hills across the bay.

The dealer in old brass spread all the gods and goddesses of India at her feet on the red-tiled porch, and Nesta prepared for the ordeal of barter, Harry in the *chaise-longue* chuckling at her Yankee effort to match the Asiatic.

Behind Harry, the doors yawned on the pleasant gloom of the windowless bungalow living-room; behind the peddler were the dusty fig trees and the parched compound where the *mali's* wife,

by numberless tins of water from the tap, coaxed the border of purple and white asters and of red and white clove-pinks to continuous bloom; shutting them all in from the desert waste round about, the tall cactus hedge with mountains looming above.

Nesta bought a beggar's bowl and a small tripod, a dancing Krishna, an elephant, a Vishnu with Lakshmi and two Ganpatis and said that was all she wanted.

"Devi?" urged the peddler, holding up a thumb-high image of Durga or Kali, flatteringly called Devi or *the* Goddess by those who fear her.

"Better cut her out. She's a bad one," Harry said. Nesta took the little brass in her hand. It was exquisitely hammered and very old, its features being slightly worn by ages of ritual, for it had been a household god, handed down from father to son, sold, perhaps, on the conversion of its worshipper to Christianity. Three hands held symbols common to many gods, a lingam, a lotus, and a spoon; the fourth grasped what is peculiar to Kali—a severed human head.

"One rupee," was Nesta's offer.

"Eight," said the peddler. She got it for two.

"You'll have to propitiate her, you know, Nesta. And she prefers human sacrifice."

Nesta laughed and laid her cheek lightly for an instant against his hand. They had been happy at the bungalow during Harry's convalescence, and she was trying to forget—trying to believe that there was no longer anyone who could come between them.

The butler, serving nine o'clock coffee on the piazza, was excited. Since cook went to the bazaar early, he brought back for breakfast all the news of the tiny hill-station which was hardly more than a score of bungalows scattered about a club-house and golf course, a half-mile out from the ancient, all-Indian and rather inimical town. The railroad was seven miles away. Without telephones, one fresh from America did feel cut off, so Becha's offering of news was not scorned. Bringing the toast, he first made low noises like an amiable Zoo.

"Yes, Becha, what is it?"

"Robbers very bad, Sahib, very bad robbers in this town. Last

night rob Wilson Sahib's house. Take bricks out wall—crawl in. Sahib must bolt tight inside. Padlock outside easy break." The bungalow was usually padlocked on the outside by the hamal, who went off to the servants' quarters with the key for the night.

"What is the use of bolting when they come through brick walls?" Nesta said.

Becha served eggs and other gossip.

"Buffalo going dry, Sahib. No milk smorning."

"Don't believe it," said Harry shortly, not unversed in native sources of profit.

"Only halfseer, Sahib."

"I'll watch the mali milk her tomorrow."

"Acha." (Very good)

"Merican lady come to Hathi Khana, Memsahib."

"What is Hathi Khana, Harry?"

"Elephant's Food. It's the name of that old house near town—the one with the carved balconies."

"Dear, I must return some calls this afternoon. People have been so kind and prompt about coming here."

"No gas this week this side Suez."

"I'll go in a tonga. Becha, get a tonga after tea."

"Acha."

The boy came salaaming with the Bombay paper of yesterday. The hamal brought the puppy-*khana*. Being Hindu, he would not feed the dogs—only the "sweeper," the outcast, would do that—so Nesta took from him the two bowls of rice and broth and herself put them on the steps for the hungry Gog and Magog. Burnished black crows flapped down from the arbor and trailed near in the gravel, snatching at scattered rice under the puppies' very jaws. A bulbul hopped daintily about the steps on the same errand. She thought a bulbul was a nightingale, but this one did not sing.

A long thin arm encircled her drooping figure.

"What are you thinking about, old girl? Robbers?"

"I was wondering who the American woman can be who has taken Hathi Khana House."

Crossing the links, dry as burlap in winter, Nesta on her way

home from the club saw a woman, alone, tee off over the Moham-medan yearly praying-place—a bit of ancient masonry, stretching across the course, a hazard for golfers for all but that one day of prayer. The woman wore a sleeveless green jacket and a black velvet tam, for it was after tea and the sun no longer demanded a topi. Her back was toward them, but even without the clue supplied by chatter at the club the hour past, Nesta would have known the swing of those square, merciless, young shoulders.

Harry was ahead with eyes only for the mountains. This was their loveliest hour when the level light rays pricked out each fold and curve of their stratified contours and the Jain cave showed white, half-way up Ram Sage. Harry had not heard what the judge's wife had said:

"There's a compatriot of yours, Mrs. Fleming, in Hathi Khana—a Mrs. Reaper."

Harry had not heard. But did Harry need to be told?

A pale amber lizard stretched in impossible stillness near the circle cast by the night light on the white-washed wall. Harry turned away from it and toward her, breathing in comfortable sleep. Each bed was draped in netting. Nesta, racked with loneliness, sat up in her diaphanous enclosure and looked across at her husband in his. Nothing between them but two thicknesses of gauze—yet how separate! It was like all individuality yearning through imponderables that condemn to isolation.

Harry did not guess of what she was aware. Nesta had never revealed her discovery that Lynn Reaper was in the country. Nothing must jar or tangle the frail web of togetherness that was again being woven about her husband and herself. Yet if he knew who was the tenant of Hathi Khana he must realize that the fact would some day reach his wife.

Until now he could not have seen the woman—hardly have communicated since Nesta landed. But tomorrow he was going back to neglected departmental duties. A brood of suspicions, beaten off again and again, settled down on her once more.

She raised the netting at the side of her pillow and reached her slippers, shaking each one automatically to dislodge the possible

scorpion or centipede. Then she stole across the room. The lizard darted under the calendar. It was the fifteenth of January.

It must be the day for some religious festival, for, if she listened hard, she could hear in the town thin chanting and banging of temple gongs to waken the gods.

She pressed her fingers flat against her eyeballs and tried to pray. But her old faith in some responsive power was withered. She dropped her hands, and her wedding ring, slipping off a cold-shrunk finger and rolling across the dresser, struck with a soft "tling" the tiny brass Kali beside the perfume bottle. The little goddess waited in heavy-lidded expectancy. Nothing less evil seemed a reality in the bad dream of being.

Nesta picked up the ring and stared at the image. She stood so still that the lizard came out into the light again.

Then—

"Oh Kali—" murmured the daughter of Mayflower Fathers, "Kali, you want human sacrifice—I offer you her life. Take her—Kali—"

Nesta slipped the ring over the goddess' brazen head and whispered—

"Here is gold—Devi—bring death to her—death to her—before she destroys us."

Fleming's wife darned socks, kept her account book with care, ordered meals, poured tea and coffee, laughed at clubhouse jokes, read the news from home, and told humorous incidents to Harry, dressed up and made calls, invited guests to dinner—British guests whose anti-Americanism was disarmed by this low-voiced hostess.

Every night she laid her hand on the wedding ring, where it hung, with the inward cry—"Bring death to her. Bring death to her."

Simple enough—death—in a land of sting and fang and pestilence. Death lurked everywhere.

Did her husband notice the ring or miss it from her finger? It was a long time since Harry had looked at her regardingly. Of the solitary golfer, she heard and saw nothing more, even when driving past the old house with the carved balconies. Harry was always with her now, except for his hours of work at the depart-

ment. He considered no engagement which would separate him from Nesta for a meal or an evening.

"He wishes to prove to me they never meet," was her thought.

The tea-pot was waiting in its cosy when the pattiwalla brought word that business detained Sahib and he would not return till evening. Nesta drank Darjeeling and ate jam sandwiches, wishing some visitor would come, calling "*Quien hai?*" outside her bell-less and knockerless house front.

Strolling with the puppies beyond the cactus hedge toward the great rock-lined well, she watched in the west the afterglow. The white ant hills, each a volcano of destructiveness, rose waist-high about her. On the road a herd of goats flung up the dust—then two religious pilgrims marked by their brick-red flags—then the swifter cloud of a coming motor. It might be Harry—but it passed the gate.

Dark fell suddenly at six, revealing a new moon sprawling on its back, horns upward like an overturned beetle, and the liquid drops of the first stars. The hamal brought a lamp to the piazza, where she still sat, for it was unusually mild; soft-winged moths beat about it. The sweeper's boy tied the night-coats on the puppies against the coming chill, and the lame old watchman appeared, his head muffled large.

In the next compound someone struck a tom-tom and a man's voice was raised in the chant for New Moon Eve. Nesta put a record on the little gramophone and drowned the chant in the worn strains of *Dardanella*.

At nine, she told Becha to serve dinner—Sahib was not coming.

At ten she said "Band karo" to the waiting hamal, who bolted the eleven outside doors and went away. She would let Harry in herself.

On going to their room, she noticed in the wastebasket the torn scraps of a written sheet. She remembered that Harry had been writing the night before. A prompting to poke and pry revived in her, and she gathered them up to put together under the eyes of Kali on the dresser. It was an unfinished letter from her husband to herself—a letter of love and contrition—this much she gathered from its pieced phrases. Why had he written instead of speaking?



Or, having written, why was it not delivered?

But the words of affection flooded her arid heart. For the first time she did not make heathen appeal to the goddess.

Before she tucked the netting about her pillow, the whisper of gravel under tires told her of Harry's return. She let him into the bedroom directly from the piazza.

"You're sick—you're hurt!"

"No—no—nonsense. Only tired. I drove to the cantonment—was kept longer than I expected and had a blow-out coming back. Got here on a rim—"

"Hadn't you an extra tire?"

"Of course but no—oh God I'm tired."

He staggered into his dressing room, refusing anything to eat. He'd dined at the Post. Nesta pushed her pale hair back with a gesture of distress. Harry seemed overwrought—half dazed—

The lizard on the wall darted at a moth—caught it—then lay again in impossible stillness—

Harry left his morning tea untasted and had not risen when coffee was served. He smiled at Nesta when she tried to feel his pulse but drew his hand away. "Just lazy."

To comfort herself she pieced together again that last broken sentence of his letter which ran:

"I have been weak not wilful—my will has always been to get out of the mire—to be as faithful as—"

Nesta ordered the mali to replace the collapsed tire on the car. After a little time, he came back, salaaming low with both hands. He could not do her bidding. The jack was not to be found.

Becha, bringing toast, gave fidgety symptoms of having news to tell, but he was forestalled by an early caller—a neighbor, the Major, visibly perturbed.

"Just dropped over to ask if you've heard about the murder?"

Nesta shook her head.

"That Mrs. Reaper in Hathi Khana—found dead before her house! Robbers, probably, as the door was open and her desk ransacked. No one can say what's missing. They used an odd weapon—and left it—an automobile jack."

# A Boy with a Gun

DESMOND CLARKE

FOR DAYS back the boy watched the wild duck rise tantalisingly from the tussocky and sedge-pocked field down by the river, but he had no gun to shoot them with. No gun, he thought, and duck—wild duck—rising with loud flapping wings from the clumps of sedge, teasingly, annoyingly inviting him to shoot. If only his father was home there would be sport! Day after day the boy searched secretly and unobtrusively every place in the house his father was likely to hide the gun, and while he searched he thought with mounting excitement of the ducks rising from the sedges and flapping their way heavenward. Then he found the gun hidden in the great hall clock whose hands never moved, and a new secret excitement sent his body tingling. The gun stood in a dark corner, and in the still darker bottom of the clock he found a box of cartridges.

Early in the morning the boy slipped out of the house, keyed, with nervous excitement. Gripping the gun firmly in front of himself and close to his body he hurried through an opening in the thinly leafed hedge, and made for the friendly shielding of a nearby copse. For a moment, but only a moment, he was glad of the shelter of the trees not only because they hid him from the house with its many eyes of windows, but kept him dry from the wetting drizzle of rain misting the countryside.

The boy stood leaning against a tree caressing and admiring the gun as though it was a loved plaything; it was smooth and soft in its oily skin. He was not afraid nor frightened of it though he remembered its violent kick on one occasion when his father gave it to him to shoot at some grazing rabbits. Now he held the stock tightly against his shoulder, pointing it upwards and aiming it around in a wide circle, and making a clicking sound with his tongue as he shot one imaginary duck after another. He soon grew tired of this make-believe as he thought of the ducks in the sedges a

field or two away, and then a fresh wave of excitement and anticipation flowed over him; his finger-tips tingled and sharp pins-and-needles pricked his body. Expertly he broke the gun and rammed in a cartridge from his pocket.

The field beyond the copse was rank and tussocky with great clumps of coarse grass, and here and there islands of spindly sedges. A few cows grazed in the field hungry and unsatisfied, nosing the near spongy ground and eating around the pock marks of the coarse clumps overgrowing the sparse fresh green grass.

The boy kept close to the edge of the field by the thin shelter of the hedge. He moved carefully and cautiously, one foot slowly before the other, his gun cocked in a ready hand. His eyes moved quickly, dartingly from side to side, for he had to watch not only for the duck which might have strayed to this field but for the early rising neighbour who would surely know him. His watchful awareness made his excitement tense, and a peculiar indefinable nervous palpitation suffused his body for he was both a hunter and hunted.

All the while, despite a conscious awareness and the need for care, he thought only of the ducks he had seen yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that again and he was certain that he would get at least one. The wickedness in taking his father's gun, in stealing the cartridges from the bottom of the clock worried him not the least, nor did he give the crime a moment's thought. He continued to move carefully, quickening his pace but losing none of his alertness or awareness even though he had never seen the wild duck sheering upwards and winging away in this field, nor indeed the next, for neither field was swampy enough for sedges to grow thickly and provide cover and hiding.

Looking ahead the boy could see the sheet of grey mist moving fast over the face of the earth and obscuring the distant humpy hills so familiar to him. The misty rain tickled his flushed cheeks like sharp little briars and the sensation was not unpleasant, for it made his face glow with warmth and there was a fresh buoyancy in the wet damp air that made him want to sing.

The boy suddenly stopped, one foot before the other, and stood quite still. His keenly attuned hearing had caught a faint uncertain sound that might have been the rustle of the sedges or the scraping

noise of a grazing cow. He waited for a while, tense and alert, and then a hare darted into view; he only saw it for a moment and then knew by the startled and disturbed screech of a blackbird that it had crossed through the hedgerow into another field and was safe.

With a disappointed hunching of his shoulders the boy continued on his way; he walked quicker now, keenly intent on reaching the low-lying fields where he had seen the wild duck so often before. Walking with a more pronounced and heavy step he regretted that in his hurry out he had forgotten to wear waders or knee-boots, for the soft ground was getting wet and squelchy underfoot, and when he stepped in the hoof-made puddles the muddy water oozed over the tops of his everyday boots, cold and uncomfortable.

The grey morning mist had grown heavier and thicker and his damp clothes clung tightly about him. When he reached the sedge covered field he moved slowly and cautiously again, afraid that the heavy and loud squelch of his footsteps might frighten the duck away. Just a little beyond where he stood now he had seen a drake and duck rise only the day before. He stood still for a moment, alert and anxious, and trying hard to beat down the tense excited sensation that surged up strongly within him.

He looked about cautiously and carefully. The duck and drake cannot be far from here, he thought. Of course he could not be sure where they really were, and though they had risen previously from about the place where he stood they might run along the ground for some distance before taking flight. He had often searched for a lark or wagtail nest around the spot he had seen them take wing and found nothing, for they had deliberately led him from their nesting place, and he recalled searching the sedges when a brace of duck took flight before him and again he found no signs of a nesting place. As he stood tense and alert he remembered very clearly the way duck rose, sheering away at a sharp low angle, the larger and heavier drake keeping just a little bit behind as if protecting its mate.

Standing now with his gun carefully pointed and his none too clean finger lightly touching the trigger, the cold wet mist washed

his face and dropped in blobs from his chin. He could feel the cold and damp creeping through his clothing chilling his body, and his feet anchored in the soft earth pained slightly with the cold. Though he felt the sharpness of the cold, the clinging dampness and the slight pain of his feet, it was more an experience and sudden realization than a sense of real discomfort, for with his mind and body tense and alert everything was fused to the single purpose of his mission. With his ears attuned to every sound even the stillness of the early morning seemed loud and noisy, and the sough of the wind, the notes of the birds, the rustle of the near-leafless hedgerow, and the soft hiss of his scarcely moved feet in their waterfilled tracks were magnified a hundredfold.

The boy started to walk again, very slowly and carefully picking his steps. Lifting each foot and putting it down gently he moved towards the center of the field where the sedges grew more thickly and were tall and stout and almost reaching above him. Intent and watching keenly ahead he occasionally stumbled and lurched a little forward or to one side as a foot pressed deeply into the softer and more marshy ground.

A sudden and for a moment uncertain sound not unlike the sharp flap of a wing made him stop and draw himself up rigidly. He had just time to press the gun hard against his shoulder and bring it into line as a pair of duck rose before him, darting off at a low angle and on what, to the boy, seemed heavy unwieldy wings. Very quickly the boy aimed between the two birds, hoping to bring both down with the scattered shot bursting between them. As the smoke and acrid smell of powder rushed past his face, the boy saw the larger bird, the green and purplish coloured drake, heel over a little to one side, a wing and body earth-turned.

A wild inchoate feeling of elation suffused the boy and as he swallowed the bile of excitement a lusty grin covered his wet-shining face and a choked cry of sheer delight broke his lips apart. He was trembling uncontrollably, then the grin fell from his face and he stared away wide-eyed for a moment, unbelieving. The drake had somehow righted itself and was still flying though with a peculiarly erratic and uncertain movement as though its sense of balance was upset. Some distance ahead the duck was flying steadily and strongly,

the sharp flap of its quick moving wings clear in the air.

The boy stumbled forward a little, broke his gun and quickly reloaded. He aimed again and fired haphazardly, unthinkingly, ahead of the seemingly injured drake at the strongly flying duck. When he had fired he realised how purposeless was his effort, for the duck was out of range, or at best the dissipated shot would be ineffective. He grit his teeth and made a sour face. A short distance away the drake continued to fly in a strangely erratic way, every now and then dropping earthwards like a mortally wounded bird, and then quickly righting itself, rising and flying upwards and forward on perfect wing.

The boy watched the drake for a moment or two puzzled, uncertain whether it was wounded or not. Sometimes he thought it would plummet to the ground and fall with a dull thud at his feet, but when his expectancy was taut with hopeful excitement the drake rose again and the flapping of its wings was loud and strong. The boy wiped his damp sleeve over his face and uttered a disappointed sigh that was almost a crying whimper. He ejected the spent cartridge from his gun and reloaded. Looking up he could see the ducks flying away; they were some distance ahead now, but the drake was still flying erratically, and appeared now and then to stop still in mid-air as if resting, but its outstretched wings appeared unable to sustain its heavy body and down it would come earthwards again. The boy raced forward as best he could, grasping the gun by both hands with tight, excited tension. He lurched from side to side, stumbled as his feet slopped, slithered, and sank in the water-bogged ground.

He was breathing quickly and jerkily, his mouth felt very dry and the bile of excitement was harsh against the back of his throat. The distance between the boy and the low erratically flying drake seemed to narrow. This increased the tension and excitement in the boy as he stumbled on, wetting his lips with his tongue and sucking the wet from about his mouth; a vengeful desire to kill the tantalizing drake was now uppermost in his mind and his finger rested taut and firm on the trigger of his gun. His eyes were bursting wide open and his lips kept moving as if in excited conversation.

The boy tried to hasten his pace and narrow still more the



distance between himself and the drake with its strangely unnatural flight in which it seemed unable to gather speed or achieve height. He could see the drake very clearly now its neck stretched out long before it, and behind the curled tip of its tail feathers were bright and glossy in the grey mist. He brought the gun to his shoulder and took deliberate aim. He held his finger for a second or two forbearing to press it for there was a slight tremor in the outstretched hand gripped around the barrel of the gun. While he tried to steady the gun he noticed a droop in one flapping wing and saw the drake keel over a little to one side.

With the gun braced against his shoulder and his eye fixed steadily on the angled bird he moved forward a step or two. Suddenly the wings ceased to flap, the outstretched neck and head of the drake fell forward. The boy lowered his gun and with an elated grin on his face he rushed forward in the direction of the falling bird; there was an excited and exultant glint in his eyes and a bubble of uncertain words broke from his lips.

The misty rain pricked the boy's flushed face; brown bog water spilled over the tops of his boots making his feet heavy and leaden. Every now and then the ground gave beneath him and the water washed up to his knees and bathed his legs in brown wet mud, but he continued to race forward, his excited mind a whirr of thoughts, fancies, wild dreams and imaginings. When the muddy water reached up to his knees and dragged greedily on his trouser ends, pulling him down in a wet embrace, no sense of danger or fear impinged upon his tumultuous and excited thoughts.

Tense and anxious he scrambled and stumbled forward, dragging his feet heavily and woodenly from the water-filled holes into which he stumbled and sank. Some yards ahead he saw the drake strike the ground lightly, wave an outstretched wing brokenly for a moment or two, and then waddle painfully into a thicket of tall water-lapped sedges.

With a great effort the boy plunged after the now hidden drake. Suddenly he found that he could not move, gripped vice-like by the sodden soft ground. He lifted one foot but the other was gripped firmly and dragged behind him. When he pulled it free

the other had sunk deeper and deeper into a dirty brown bubbling mess of water and bog earth. With a wild frightened effort he began dragging and pulling, threshing and sloshing about in an ever widening circle of thick brown muddy water that seemed to grow softer and more sticky with every movement. He had thrown his gun from him, for he felt that it impeded him, and now he could see it lying a little ahead of him in a narrow trench of its impression and sinking slowly under mud. As he threshed and clawed, the ground grew softer and came away and poured through his clenched fists. He could feel the soft, soggy earth reaching up higher and higher, gripping and holding him with inexorable power.

He searched around wildly for a firm piece of ground and clutched at a clump of sedges, but the sedges came away with the brown, wet earth and roots in his hand. All the while he could feel the sticky wetness gripping him softly yet tightly and firmly, and the gurgling sucking sound rising about him grew louder and more ominous like a harsh pitiless laugh. The boy braced his arms under his chest and struggled hard to tear himself from the cold, soft, but firm embrace. His folded arms sank before him. Wriggling his body from side to side he tried to wipe the blinding mud from his face and drag his buried legs out of the ground but they would not come.

Holding back the tears filling his eyes, he threshed wildly about waving his hands and clutching the soggy earth, but the more he threshed and wallowed the more the thick muddy water crept up around and about him in an ever widening sea that was murky and disturbed.

Tears broke from his eyes, tears of pain—hopelessness. The bog gathered fiercely and inexorably about him and he began to scream and cry out aloud, his piercing shouts tearing discordantly through the mistiness falling about him. As his screams trailed away and his tortured body grew tired and limp he saw very dimly a drake rise from the ground beyond his growing sea of mud and fly cleanly and strongly away, its long and loud quacking dying quickly in his ears.

# Comeback

E. ROELKER CURTIS

IT WAS one of those blue and gold February days south of the Rio Grande Valley when the shadows are sharp cut and the sun is strong. It felt good to be back in Mexico City after some fifteen years, where I had lived as a small boy. On this particular afternoon I was sipping a beer in the balcony of *Los Toros Bravos*—preparatory to going up to the arena to see the bull fight which is always held Sundays throughout the season at four. A sudden hushing of the noisy crowd made me look up from the paper I was reading.

This balcony at *The Brave Bulls* overlooks an old time square not far from the pens where the bulls are stabled before a *corrida*; and on this Sunday afternoon the plaza was as gay as at fiesta-time. A brass band from a neighboring barracks occupied the pavilion in the center; and from there periodically arose a blare of popular tunes loud enough to silence the bell that rang the quarter hour in the old church opposite.

Below, in the shade of the towering laurel trees, a crowd composed of Indians, Mexicans, and some tourists seethed about. Local dandies, decked out in colorful shirts and braid-trimmed garments, tipped hat and eye to girls resplendent in full skirts and ruffled blouses. The girls piled color upon color. They were hung all over with shawls and beads, and they wore assorted ribbons in their glossy black hair.

There were clusters, too, of middle-aged folk with children—Mama treating a batch of small fry to the bloody spectacle the way we treat our kids to the circus. The square was swarming with these little people, darting about to tag one another or tease their elders into buying them another magenta colored plume of spun sugar, bright balloon, or ribboned toy cane.

The sidewalk tables just below the balcony where I was sitting had been reserved by the *aficionados a las corridas*, or bullfight fans; and they were filled now with vociferous men and sporty type

vivacious women. So, the sudden hush that occurred made me look about to see what had caused it; and then I—like everybody else—was staring at a tall, gaunt, magnificent old man, standing on the steps of the Spanish church opposite, shading his eyes with his hand.

Evidently, he had just come out of the church, for he stood there for a long moment, sheltering his sight against the glare, which must have seemed savage indeed to age-dimmed eyes gentled and refreshed but an instant before by the ecclesiastical gloom. For, though this was the land of the big hat, this man wore the *birreta*, a basque-like beret that puffed out above his temples like the stunted horns of a bull. The cut of his suit had an old time style, suggestive of the bullring. But it was his bearing rather than his dress that excited my curiosity. He was at once elegant and compelling; and I sensed that it was the latent dominance in the man which had hushed the people and made them stare. He stood poised, as if expectant of applause; as if he had been hailed so often in his life that to receive homage gracefully was instinctive in him.

The *vivas* did not ring out. As the crowd turned with indifference, the erect, proud frame seemed visibly to shrink and bow under defeat and frustration. Yet it was an extraordinarily light and tripping gait, coupled with a bravura-like grace, that bore him down the steps and round the square to Obispo Street—where I lost him in the crowd.

Presently, as I came out of the restaurant, I came upon him again. But he of the proud bearing now sat slumped over a sidewalk table, his head on his arms. This dejected attitude seemingly made it possible for me to stare at him without his becoming aware of my curiosity; and I noted—skin tight black breeches rusty with wear; a patch in the elbow of his bolero; a clean but frayed linen cuff protruding below the sleeve; and that the pom-poms on his pumps were limp and bedraggled.

Clearly, whoever this was—and I thought he might be a hanger-on of some famous matador, the sort that “runs the horns” in practice—he had fallen on evil days.

The square was emptying. The musicians had put away their instruments; and the crowd was slowly wending its way up the narrow street called Obispo, past the pens where the bulls for the

*corrida* were stalled, to the vast arena beyond. But I still lingered, hopeful that he who had excited my curiosity might arouse himself, and go along with me.

The man must have sensed my interest, for he suddenly sat up, drew himself against the chair-back, and glared at me with sombre coal-like gaze. In vague recognition, I attempted a smile. One might just as well have smiled into the glaring eyes of an angry bull in that instant when the mad creature pauses to gather himself for the charge. My smile petered out sheepishly. Heaven only knows what insults the angered stranger might have spat at me had not our encounter been interrupted by a distant sound of fury and confusion that echoed from the narrow canon of Obispo Street.

He who had seemed about to lock horns with me, cocked an ear; and within the instant we heard the bellow of an angry bull. There followed a great human outcry of terror, and the people began pouring back into the deserted little square. Men, women, and children, and a scattering of dogs. Some glanced fearsomely behind them as they came tripping, stumbling, panting—in a mad rush to escape the hurtling terror behind.

There was time yet to open vestibule doors and let them in. A woman clutching a child cried out, pounding on the heavy oaken slabs, "The bull! He stops to gore a man! Let us in, or he will gore us all!"

In the noise and confusion I had forgotten the man who had taken exception to my curiosity, when, all at once I saw him step down from the curb into the street and with effortless courtesy stop the flight of a terrified girl wearing a blood-red shawl. He did it with a bow and a flourish worthy of a courtier.

"Let me pass!" she screamed at him, attempting to go her way. "*Viene el toro!*"

"Evidently," replied her detainer suavely. "So do me the honor to lend me your *rebozo?*" So saying, he flicked the shawl from her shoulders with a dexterous wrist and flourished it behind his shoulders in the *farol*.

The girl screamed and fled, for the beast was upon us. He was one of those great black bulls from Buénepaso, where they breed some of the most courageous bulls in Mexico. As the last stragglers

fell away before him, the bull bent his long, crescent shaped horns to spear a skinny half-starved mongrel. He seemed about to catch and toss the little Indian dog when a sound truck careened around a corner by the church, racking out, as luck would have it, a *paso doble* of the bulls.

Startled by the perhaps familiar bullfight music, the great beast raised his horned crest and stared; and I watching him in that instant when he stood motionless, tail turned, saw blood trickling down from horns to ears, and the horns themselves were wet and reddish.

With the shawl tightly furled, the old man advanced boldly to a spot directly between the sound truck, which the driver and his assistant were hurriedly backing away, and the champing, snorting beast.

The man invited the bull with a swirling *veronica*. With a grunt the animal turned his heavy head and refocussed his attention. It was a dreadful moment. The bull, trembling and lusting for more blood, gathered up the strength in the tractor-powered haunches and in the tight swelling muscles of the arched neck; and in that instant, the man, standing erect and proud, toes-out-heels-in, sent the cape whirling about his knees in the *rebolera*. As the bull charged, the man extended the cloth from his side, luring the shiny black eyes and the piercing horns in a well-executed *gaonera*.

Someone in the crowd yelled, "*Que buena, Luìs! Que bueno!*" And it was then that I recognized Luìs Martìn, the great matador and hero I had worshipped and followed about as a boy.

Indeed, I had had the bad luck to be in the *Playa de Mexico*—the bullring in Mexico City—when Luìs, then at the very peak of his fame, had had one of those bad afternoons that all matadors experience at times. Luìs' bad hour had begun with a difficult bull which he could not dominate. He could not make the bull charge past him. The crowd had begun to whistle and boo when it realized that Luìs had given up all idea of developing a *fàna*—the cape and sword play with the *muleta*. When Luìs started to square this still vigorous bull for a sword thrust, he was pelted with cushions protesting the scheme. Luìs—to my shame as well as his!—had persisted. When he finally delivered the blow, the sword hit bone and



bent and flew into the air, leaving the cape hanging on the horns.

Disarmed, Luís was scampering to the *barrera* when the bull caught him in the right thigh. The intervention was swift and successful—the peons confused the bull with their capes, while the attendants carried Luís from the ring.

I remember feeling sick with shame and apprehension for Luís for weeks on end—until he was well enough to go back to the ring. When he did, I was sicker still—Luís had lost his nerve. He who had been “liberal with the cape, dexterous with the *muleta*, and grandiose with the sword,” now jerked the cloth high and away every time the horns scooped close. At times, Martín could not even keep his feet firmly planted. Choked with a surge of terror he could not control, he’d scamper to the *barrera*.

At first Luís fans had been patient, extraordinarily so for *aficionados a las corridas*—the public that thoroughly understands bullfighting is the most fickle and cruel since the mob that thumbed down gladiators in the Roman Coliseum. “Luís will come back,” we told one another. But he never had, up to the time we moved back home.

I gathered now, from the shouts of the bystanders, that Luís never had staged a come-back until today. There was round after round of applause for his skill in manipulating the clumsy woolen shawl. There was even a murmur of admiration from those, who, but a moment or so before, had been madly seeking shelter. Some applauded from balconies and rooftops; but the young men emerged from doorways to get a better view, as again and again the old man, taunting the bull with insults the while, made now a river, now a fan of that unwieldy blood-red cloth.

Old Luís, each one said to the next man with a lift of the eyebrows, had got back his form at last. Again and again the bull wheeled and came at him like a jet; but with each charge the brave old man maneuvered the bull a few paces back in the direction from which he had come, so that it became apparent to all that what Luís was trying to do was to take the bull back to his pen.

But he could not do it alone. “*Ayuda amigos!*” he shouted suddenly. “Take from your sweethearts *la mantilla roja!* And be quick about it in the name of God!”

Born to love of danger and bred to cruel sport, several young Mexicans responded eagerly to the challenge. They began to bait that bull for Luìs the way peons work under the matador in the ring.

Now that he had a chance to catch his breath and plan, Luìs swiftly took the bull into the narrow opening of Obispo Street—and immediately my view of the combat was cut off.

To be there at the very instant when Luìs had at last risen above his fear to prove himself again one of the greatest Mexican matadors of our time, and then be forced to mill along behind the crowd, was intolerable. Casting about for a point of vantage, I made my way to the rear entrance of *Los Toros Bravos* and tore up three flights of stairs to the roof.

A fat old chef was leaning over the balustrade in the far corner and shouting, "Take care, Luìs! Watch your step!"

I leaned over the parapet and saw, directly below, the most unusual and daring exhibition going on. Luìs had got the bull round the corner from Obispo Street into the narrow alley that leads to the pen where the bulls are kept before a *corrida*. But the cobbled alley was too narrow to permit the technique he had used with his assistants; so Luìs had taken on the job singlehanded again.

This was now a combat of rage against wit; a duel of brute force against the technique of Luìs Martín. For Luìs was leading the bull in a fantastically graceful, beautiful kind of dance toward the open gate of the corral. He did it, twenty feet or so at a time, by skipping backward. He would pause and deliberately execute a flowing figure with the cape to hold the bull's attention; and then, as the bull paused to gore the floating fan-like shape, Luìs would be off again. Each manipulation drew the bull nearer to the gate, which we could see was manned on both sides to pen the bull the instant he crossed through the opening.

The old chef kept shouting warnings to Luìs. The fat cook had flung an arm over my shoulder and every time Luìs got away he hugged me with relief.

Luìs was right in front of the gate, at last. One more charge and the bull would be inside. The chef and I held our breath and looked for a happy conclusion.

We didn't get it. As he ran backward for the last time, Luìs tripped over the block in the ground to which the two halves of the wide gate attach. The bull lowered his head, scooped up Luìs and tossed him inside. The gates came together behind the bull's tail, and that fat old chef and I clung to each other, sobbing.

The City of Mexico honored Luìs Martín in death as his countrymen had not honored him since his heyday. The flags throughout the capital were hung at half mast; the sheets of the leading journals were edged in black; and they laid Luìs out for burial in the National Cathedral, dressed in a new matador's outfit of canary satin brocade embroidered in spangles. It would cost the tax-payers many, many pesos.

When I followed in the train of *aficionados*, many of whom wore a crêpe band on their left sleeve, and saw Luìs lying in his coffin, though it saddened me, I could not help but feel that Luìs would not have had it otherwise. For the face of Luìs, above the heart-shaped scarlet cloth and steel pointed stick of his brutal calling, looked fulfilled and satisfied in death, as I had not seen it look for some fifteen years.

"*Adios*, brave Luìs," I whispered, and went my way.

## Rosa Rorans (Saint Birgitta)

Translated from the Mediaeval Latin  
of Bishop Nils of Sweden by Henry Goddard Leach

Rose bedewing benediction  
Star bestilling bright transfixion  
    Birgitta bail of chastity!  
Pour the piety of heaven,  
Drop on us the purest leaven  
    In vales of our misery.

# Willard R. Trask: A Universal Garland

CHARLES NORMAN

THE ART of the translator reached its highest achievement in the age of Elizabeth I. "A study of Elizabethan translations," wrote the late Professor F. O. Matthiessen of Harvard, "is a study of the means by which the Renaissance came to England." North's *Plutarch*, source-book of Shakespeare's Roman plays, and Florio's *Montaigne* are two of the mighty works examined by him in *Translation: An Elizabethan Art*. In it he states: "The translator's work was an act of patriotism. He, too, as well as the voyager and merchant, could do some good for his country: he believed that foreign books were just as important for England's destiny as the discoveries of her seamen, and he brought them into his native speech with all the enthusiasm of a conquest."

Today, the United States appears to occupy a position analogous to that of Elizabethan England. Her ocean is the air, her ports of call the military bases scattered like plates around the globe. Her greatness is astir. Willard R. Trask's labors, in making the literature of other lands available to us, unites the nations in another way.

Mr. Trask is a solitary and little known figure in contemporary American letters. He resembles, in some respects, a type of European literary man. Distinguished by an enormous erudition and rare poems, for the most part unpublished—they are not "in style"—he is also the author of a book which has achieved something of the status of a classic, *Joan of Arc: Self-Portrait*. He makes his living translating; he has six or seven languages at his command. Some of his translating projects have been truly formidable—Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, and *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, by E. R. Curtius.

He has also translated learned works and essays by André

Malraux, José Ortega y Gasset, and Mircea Eliade; fiction by Thomas Mann, Zoë Oldenburg, and Ramón Sender; a play and the selected poems of Hugo von Hofmannsthal; *The Cherubinic Wanderer* of Angelus Silesius, and, in collaboration with George Margulies, Chinese poems, folk songs and prose. He is also the translator of the poems of Francesco Bianco.<sup>1</sup>

The list is by no means complete.

Mr. Trask is at present at work on a favorite project, begun long ago and always taken up when the pressure of other work has slackened: a study of medieval Portuguese lyric poetry, for which he has received a Bollingen grant. The study will include about one hundred poems in his own translation, with individual commentaries. "The first purpose of this study," he told the Bollingen Foundation, "is to re-annex a province to literature. The second is . . . to contribute to an understanding of the poetic function and process."

In making this selection from his work I have been guided by general interest and general unavailability. I start with *Joan of Arc: Self-Portrait*. Mr. Lewis Gannett termed it "a little masterpiece" when it appeared, while Miss Ingrid Bergman, rehearsing for the rôle of Joan, called it "my Bible" and kept it by her bed. Nevertheless, it is out of print.

In his Foreword, Mr. Trask wrote: "The possession of these documents [the contemporary French and Latin records of the trial] places us in an unique position with respect to Joan: we hear her speak. We have not only what she would tell us, but her very words, in a way that we cannot be sure we have the words even of those who live for us chiefly in what they have spoken—Socrates, say, or Saint Francis. . . . A trial for heresy, it was not confined, as judicial trials are, to the proving of some one circumstance. Joan confessed that she had been guided by voices since childhood; her whole life, then, lay under the same suspicion. And into her whole life the judges probed."

I follow his chronology. It will be observed, I believe, that Joan's questioners—inquisitors may be an old-fashioned word—never ceased to probe for a chink in her armor.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Literary Review* (Autumn, 1957), pp. 37-50.

## From *Joan of Arc: Self Portrait*

### Girlhood

Among my own people, I was called Jehanette; since my coming into France, I am called Jehanne.

I was born in the village of Domremy. My father's name is Jacques d'Arc, my mother's Isabelle.

As long as I lived at home, I worked at common tasks about the house, going but seldom afield with our sheep and other cattle. I learned to sew and spin; I fear no woman in Rouen at sewing and spinning. . . .

Not far from Domremy there is a tree called the Ladies' Tree, and others call it the Fairies' Tree, and near it there is a fountain. And I have heard that those who are sick with fever drink at the fountain or fetch water from it, to be made well. Indeed, I have seen them do so, but I do not know whether it makes them well or not. I have heard, too, that the sick, when they can get up, go walking under the tree. It is a great tree, a beech, and from it our fair May-branches come; and it was in the lands of Monseigneur Pierre de Bourlemont. Sometimes I went walking there with the other girls, and I have made garlands under the tree for the statue of the Blessed Virgin of Domremy. . . .

I do not know whether, after I reached years of discretion, I ever danced at the foot of the tree; I may have danced there sometimes with the children; but I sang there more than I danced. . . .

When I was thirteen, I had a voice from God to help me to govern myself. The first time, I was terrified. The voice came to me about noon: it was summer, and I was in my father's garden. I had not fasted the day before. I heard the voice on my right hand, towards the church. There was a great light all about.

I vowed then to keep my virginity for as long as it should please God.

I saw it many times before I knew that it was Saint Michael. . . . He told me that Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret would come to me, and that I must follow their counsel. . . . He told me of the pitiful state of the Kingdom of France. And he told me that I must go to succour the King of France.



## The Trial

*In what form was Saint Michael when he appeared to you?*

I saw no crown upon him. I know nothing of his garments.

*Was he naked?*

Do you think that God has not wherewith to clothe him?

*Do you not believe that you are subject to the Church, which is on earth, that is, to our holy father, the Pope, the cardinals, archbishops, bishops and other prelates of the Church?*

Yes—our Lord first served!

## Last Day

Alas! Am I so horribly and cruelly used, that my clean body, never yet defiled, must this day be burnt and turn to ashes! Ha! a! I would rather be beheaded seven times than suffer burning.

Bishop, I die through you!

Master Peter, where shall I be this night? By God's grace I shall be in Paradise.

## She Is Led to the Place of Execution

Rouen, Rouen, shalt thou be my dwelling?

## At the Stake

I pray you, go to the nearest church, and bring me the cross, and hold it up level with my eyes until I am dead. . . .

Jesus, Jesus!

"We talked of translation," Boswell declares in the *Life*, and reports what his friend had to say on the subject. It was considerable.

"You may translate books of science exactly," Dr. Johnson said. "You may also translate history, in so far as it is not embellished with oratory, which is poetical. Poetry, indeed, cannot be translated; and, therefore, it is the poets that preserve languages; for we would not be at the trouble to learn a language, if we could have all that is written in it just as well in a translation. But as the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written, we learn the language."

Another time—while discussing Potter's *Aeschylus*—Johnson said: "We must try its effect as an English poem; that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation. Translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original."

Professor Matthiessen, in the work already cited, limited his study of Elizabethan translation to prose. "The reason," he wrote, "is that the translations in verse naturally present a wholly different problem in technique, and are, on the whole, distinctly inferior to those in prose. The barriers of meter are not easily crossed from one language into another, and it requires a poet to translate a poet."

Translators of verse have solved a sometimes insuperable problem—that of meter—by disregarding it entirely; they have translated the matter. In the end the test is: can such a method be successful? A moment's thought will show that, in the right hands, it has been successful for a long time: the Homeric books and the Bible, particularly the Psalms, are prime examples. I now offer some verse translations, with and without meter, by Mr. Trask.

## From the Portuguese of King Denis

1261-1325

### I. Girl To Her Mother

What pains you have been at, my lady mother, to keep me close so that I cannot see my lover, my treasure, my joy! But by the Lord that made me, if I can contrive to see him and talk with him, I will do it for his sake. And let who will be sorry.

You have done all that you could, my lady mother, to keep me close so that I should not see my lover, my dear heart. But if by trying I can contrive to see him and talk with him, I will do it for his sake. And let who will be sorry.

It was my death you sought, mother, when you contrived that there should be no way for me to see my lover, my treasure. But one thing is certain: if I can contrive to see him and talk with him, I will do it for his sake. And let who will be sorry.

And, mother, if I can manage that, the rest can look after itself

## II. Girl To Her Lover

I saw, my dear, what a heaviness fell on you when you could have no words with me yesterday. But know, my dear, that your heaviness was not to be matched with mine.

I was sure that you were near out of your mind with grief. But, my dear, come back. Be sure that your heaviness was not to be matched with mine.

I knew, my dear, that your grief was such as you had never felt before. Yet you hid it; be sure, then, that your heaviness was not to be matched with mine.

For there is no reckoning mine, as there was no hiding it.

## Portuguese Folk Songs

## I

Absence has a child,  
A child named longing.  
Both live in my house  
Against my will.

## II

O love, if I could see you  
In each month, thirty days,  
Seven days in every week,  
Once every minute!

## III

When I was a girl  
I wore bright ribbons in my hair.  
Now I am a wife  
And carry babies in my arms.

## IV

Our sorry lot!  
Be born, and sin;  
Sin, and then die;  
Die, and then burn.

## From the Italian of Matteo Boiardo

15th Century

## Sonnet

Take wings and song from birds, leaves and bright color from flowers, from grass its greenness and the new smell of it, take flowers and grass from meadows, their branching horns from flying stags, from the sky stars, sun, and every light: so can you take love from a noble heart, and hope from sweet new love.

For, without love, a heart is without hope, a branchless, leafless tree, a waveless river, a waterless spring. Love takes all sadness from a heart, and all that is good in the world is found in a heart that loves.

## From the Italian of Lodovico Paterno

16th Century

## Sonnet

Betwixt the murmurous beds of twin swift-gliding  
Streams, and beneath a loved and honored tree,  
With Chromios and Amarantha in company,  
Altibios loosed his tongue in words soft-sliding:  
"O Father Jove! O thou who still'st the chiding  
Of winds, Aeolus! —and Juno loveth thee—  
O wealthy Pales! O Cynthia fancy-free!  
Hear ye, attentive, one in ye confiding.  
Grant that this tree may flourish many a year  
Unharmed by thunder-stone, or wind, or shower,  
With leaf and fruit and bloom forever fair:  
A shade for shepherds, for the nymphs a bower.  
Grant it all gifts of water, soil, and air—  
And one to sing of love, and one to hear."

# From the German of Angelus Silesius

17th Century

## I

Bloom, frozen Christian, bloom! May stands before thy door!  
If now thou do not bloom, thou art dead for ever more.

## II

Make thine heart calm and still, my friend, for it is not  
In tempests, earthquakes, fires, that God is to be sought.

## III

A heart that time and place suffice to satisfy  
Knows nothing of its own immeasurability.

## IV

See, where thou nothing seest; go, where thou canst not go;  
Hear, where there is no sound; then where God speaks art thou.

# Ancient Chinese Folk Songs<sup>1</sup>

## I

Sunny spring—second and third month.  
The grass and the water have one hue;  
Bushes are heavy with flowers,  
Sweet as my beloved's breath.

## II

Spring: the forest flowers overflow with beauty.  
Spring: bird-voices overflow with pain.  
Spring: the wind's breath overflows with love—  
My petticoat of silk blows open.

<sup>1</sup> with George Margulies

## III

Very soon, my lover will be here,  
Coming through the eastern window, reaching my little door.  
My mother has not yet gone to sleep—  
My heart beats like a sword on a shield.

## IV

In the brook there is ice three feet thick,  
The white snow covers a thousand leagues.  
My heart is like the evergreen.  
Your heart—what is it like?

## V

Night: thinking—  
A wind blows and the curtain stirs.  
I say, "That is my lover coming."

## VI

How can I bear this grief?  
At night, in their houses, people talking—  
But it is never you and I.

## VII

Thinking of my lover, I cannot eat.  
I go and wander at the crossroad,  
Searching the wind for news.

## Yen Cho Speaks with the King of Ch'i<sup>1</sup>

*From Chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms*

1st Century, B. C.

King Hsiüan of Ch'i saw Yen Cho and said, "Cho, come here."  
But Cho gave him back his words, saying, "King, come here."  
King Hsiüan was displeased. The courtiers said: "Among men  
the king is ruler; Cho, among men, is a subject. If the King says

<sup>1</sup> with George Margulies



to Cho, 'Cho, come here,' by what right does Cho give him back his words, saying, 'King, come here'?"

Cho answered: "For Cho to come to the King would be flattery to power. For the King to come to Cho would be respect to a scholar. For Cho to flatter power is less honorable than for the King to respect a scholar."

The King showed anger in his face and said, "Are kings to be revered or are scholars to be revered?"

He answered: "Assuredly, scholars are to be revered. He who reigns is not to be revered."

The King said, "Can you explain yourself?"

Cho said: "I can. Formerly, when Ch'in was making war on Ch'i, the King of Ch'in decreed that any one daring to gather faggots at fifty paces from the tomb of the scholar Liu-hsia Chi should be put to death without mercy. And he made another decree, which said: 'If any one is able to capture the head of the King of Ch'i, he will be granted in appanage a marquisate over ten thousand families and he will receive also twenty-four thousand ounces of gold!'

"If that be considered, it appears that the head of a living king is less esteemed than the tomb of a dead scholar."

King Hsiüan said: "Alas! How is it possible to undervalue a sage? I invited this insult myself. There is no more to be said."

"You, Master Yen Cho, will enter into fixed relations with me. For food, you may be sure you will receive the flesh of the beasts of sacrifice; when you go out, you may be sure that you will ride in a chariot; the clothing of your wife and children will be rich and beautiful."

Yen Cho refused and took his leave, saying: "Jade is born in the mountains. If it is worked, it loses its integrity. Not that it is not costly and precious, but its primitive state is no longer whole. The scholar is born in the humble fields. If he is sought out and given advancement, he is put on a wage. Not that he is not honored and famed, but his person and his mind are no longer whole."

"I, Cho, wish to be able to eat late so that appetite will take the place of meats; I wish to be able to walk quietly, and to let that be my chariot; I wish to be free from crimes, and to let that

be my dignity. I wish to be pure, calm, just and upright for my own satisfaction."

Then he bowed twice, took his leave and departed.

Sages say: "Cho was wise enough to content himself with his destiny. He went back to his natural state, he returned to unquarried jade. And so, to the end of his life, he continued without stain."

Mr. Trask is of New England stock, a Yankee aristocrat. Those who know him have remarked on his physical as well as spiritual resemblance to Thoreau; Mr. Trask, however, is tall. There is the same temperament, which does not suffer fools gladly or otherwise; the same independence, self-sufficiency and detachment. (Some have found him "cold.") Like Thoreau, he loves and reveres the Greek and Latin classics, and has a similar interest in, and affinity with, Oriental thought, particularly Buddhism. And like Thoreau he combines a physically active life with his scholarship. He has walked the country to the city. He usually rises at dawn and goes for a walk in the woods, whatever the weather may be. He is an enthusiastic mountain-climber. He knows a great deal about birds and mosses. He is a naturalist. Again, like his fellow New Englander, he eschews politics; I have seen him leave a room when the discussion turned to this subject. But once, during a presidential campaign, I found him interested. Hoover had declared that if he lost, "grass would grow in the streets."

"If that were a promise instead of a threat," Trask told me, "I should be tempted to go in for politics."

But now the resemblances thin out and end. Mr. Trask, unlike Thoreau, could never settle down, voluntarily, to a diet of Indian meal and molasses. He prefers caviar and smoked oysters. He has lived a great deal abroad, and finds exotic food—the more exotic the better—to his taste. During a long sojourn in Paris, he was literary secretary to Ford Madox Ford, a notable *gourmet*. Also, unlike Thoreau, Mr. Trask is married; his wife, the former Georgi-*anne* Sampson, is the author of a novel and lecturer in English at Vassar.

He has gathered, in the course of a long career of reading and book-hunting, a library which, if honestly described, must bring

pain to fastidious collectors. There are many first editions in it, some of them quite rare. But hardly a volume is unmarred by a missing back or side, and sometimes even a title-page. It is, however, a serviceable library for a scholar—a library to be read, not merely to be admired. Mr. Trask holds each decrepit volume as precious as though it were pristine; nay, more precious; for a battered book needs no coddling—it lets itself be read. He has read them all. He works surrounded by these waifs and strays of the book world. One of them, purchased for a nickel, is inscribed by Tennyson "To my dear wife." Mr. Trask discovered the inscription because he knew that a flyleaf precedes the half-title and pried it apart from the end-paper, to which it had stuck.

He has probably read more poetry than any man alive; at least, I think so. His favorite poet is Spenser. I propose now to offer the reader some examples of his own poems to balance his universal

These have not been published before.

## Pastoral

I, who have ridden the world  
From day's end to day's end,  
Am fallen on fields and meadows  
Where shepherds tend

Slow-moving flocks; the air  
Is hot and still,  
Sheep nuzzle the stream  
Drinking their fill.

The hours bring evening on:  
Dogs nip and bark,  
The sheep are folded safe  
Well before dark.

High overhead the clouds  
Still gleam with gold,  
The ever-wandering flock  
No shepherds fold.

## October

Now, every day, the runner sun applies  
To shorter courses for a lesser prize.

He, to whom all was possible, is proud  
If he can only shoulder back a cloud.

This morning I was up to see him rise,  
Stared in his face and never blinked my eyes.

Was this the light no vision could endure—  
This filtered water, tasteless, cold and pure?

It trickled down the sky and touched the leaves;  
They let it fall like gently dripping eaves.

I could imagine it among the hills;  
It wandered down their sides in little rills.

Through grassy meadows I could trace its road,  
Lost it in stubble where the fields were mowed.

I saw it find the river, tumble in—  
But where did water end and light begin?

The streams I followed seemed to change their course:  
They flowed again, but what had been their source

Was now their ocean. My distracted eye  
Saw river-water spreading through the sky.

. . . . .

This is the nipping time of feasts and fairs,  
Markets enchanted by the smell of pears—

An active time for him who acts; for him  
Who looks, a time in which the world grows dim,

A heavy time, a time in which to brood:  
Silver to bronze—more precious, more subdued.

## Exile

Arcadia is

Where mountains are, peaks,  
Ferns, foxes, springs dripping from rock, and the  
Lost rain that suddenly rises through roots  
At the foot of a sloping field. And chatter of sparrows. Notes.  
Answering notes. The notes unanswered. Flight:  
The swallow swerving from his delicious oval  
Into intricate explorations, and returning;  
The coasting heron, the kingfisher's bolt, the  
Owl drawn down in furred flight, recovering  
Sharply.

Give me my land again, and I will walk  
With the owl at my right hand, the earth under my foot,  
And silence guarding my ear, and wisdom speaking  
When silence sleeps.

## Pastoral in Dialogue

"Sylvan, what cheer? Is anything astir?"

"Nothing, long since, but the executioner."

"What can I do to save or to be saved?"

"Eat what you have, and dig yourself a grave."

"In beauty, truth, and piety, no trust?"

"The worm rejoices not in learned dust."

## Inscription

This tree

Gave shade and sound to thee.

Its yield

Put in thy mouth the sweetness of thy field.

Its death

Gives thy hearth breath.

# Sweden's Contemporary Poets

HENRY GODDARD LEACH

**A**LTHOUGH Sweden through two world wars was able to maintain her ice-bound neutrality, her poets and other artists have been less Nordic than they have been quite cosmopolitan.

In fact, since 1900, the poets of that Northern land have subscribed, decade after decade, to the *isms* of art prevailing in the Western world. The *ism* of the first ten years was post-impressionism, in the twenties futurism, in the thirties imagism, in the forties neo-humanism, and now in the fifties atomic expressionism with its accent on the blurred image.

In the first decennium of our century, a Swedish cartoonist and humorist, Albert Engstrom, composed a serious little poem that was not published in print but was cast in bronze on the bell of the church in the iron-mining village of Kiruna, north in Lapland, where the nomad Lapps driving their reindeer across the plateau could hear it toll the hours, the birth, and the funerals. Some years ago the present critic visited Lapland, climbed up to that belfry and wrote a translation of Engstrom's poem:

Rise my clang to the sun,  
to the Northern lights my tiding.  
Waken the dreaming fells,  
the moors in slumber deep.  
Bless the laboring fields,  
their fruitfulness abiding.  
Consecrate at last  
to the place of eternal sleep.

There are other Swedish poets, indeed, who have not subscribed decade after decade to the prevailing moods of verse. Hjalmar Gullberg, for example, in his classicism, and Karl Asplund in his humanism have persisted in being traditionalists.

Hjalmar Gullberg is so good a classicist that old Horace himself might have written these lines of Gullberg's:



Deep in me rises from a vanished air  
The sound of music, scent of woman's hair.  
That which I never had but yet I face  
Is near me now where else I fare.  
O Lord, grant to me a little grace!

Or take this poem by Asplund. Asplund is a good poet when his themes are sorrow. Sorrow is a normal, not a cubistic or futuristic human experience. Else how could we mortals appreciate our joys, when they came to us? Here is the wistful tenderness of Asplund's verses about a sick child:

Tiny hand that hotly plucks the covers,  
Pale and thin,  
Tiny mouth that quivers with the fever,  
Pallid chin,  
How small you are and so very lonely,  
So lonely, small,  
While in the late night anguish only  
Conquers all.

Two really great Swedish poets, Per Lagerkvist and Harry Martinson, on the other hand, have changed the technique of their verse with every passing decade. Lagerkvist in his imagist period affirms his rather original conception of the divinity of man. "Life can be annihilated," he said, "but not WE." And in his poem "You are not Yourself":

You are not yourself, but life in you  
is a fleeting guest for the time being  
that to yourself does pose as true  
but is not bound and soon is fleeing.  
And yet life asks that I shall treasure it,  
—this gift immortal that I must remit.—  
I honor not to us the giving.  
Mankind I honor but despise the living!

And one of Harry Martinson's poems, "After," though it expresses art by precise rather than blurred images, is a kind of

prelude to the poetry of the present atomic age. It has been successfully translated by Richard B. Vowles:

After the battle of Helgoland  
and after the battle of Utshima  
the sea dissolved the driftwood of men's bodies  
and transformed them with diluent salts  
slowly back to the sea—  
to a creating primordial water,  
to a new attempt.

That was optimism for atomists—of a sort!

Many of Harry Martinson's poems, real poetry only because of the "left-wing" music of their Swedish, are quite untranslatable, but his purpose, as in his famous poem "Sun Smoke" about bathing women, can be discerned even in a literal translation, not by Richard Vowles but by this critic:

I see in the distance women.  
They bathe in a summer-freckled lake.  
Listen to their crystal choir of screams  
dancing over the blue water's filament! Seems like a  
torch of flowers and a shout of saints,  
their white nakedness glory  
arising in a blossoming Japanese crabapple phantom.  
Sun smoke! Sun smoke!

In the forties a group of young Swedish poets persisted with imagism against the rising tide of neo-humanism. They called themselves *Fyrtotalisterna*, "the men of the forties." Their leader was Erik Lindegren. Take his poem "The Dead":

No, the dead shall not beg but deliver.  
They who knew triumph beheaded shall raise up their head,  
and they who succumbed to smoke shall see clearly,  
and they who vented their spleen shall flow like  
fresh springlets,  
and those who fell in adversity shall themselves do  
the felling,  
and those who were slain by lead shall slay with fire,

and they who were drowned by the wave shall themselves  
be the storm.

And the dead shall not beg but deliver.

In Sweden today every other adult seems to be either a poet or a mechanic—or both! But the American who wishes to know only a little about the host of Swedish poets who deluge the bookstands of a land where poetry is as popular as detective stories need only read the works of Gullberg, Asplund, Lindegren, Ekeman, Lagerkvist, and Harry Martinson.

Today Swedish poets are well launched in the sea of atomic expressionism. Let us choose two examples. The first, "The Earth and Mr. Jonson," is short and whimsical. It is by Hans Botvid, as translated by Lennert Edberg and Martin S. Allwood:

Round the great big sun  
steals the little earth,  
trembling and demure.  
But on the trembling earth  
struts our Mr. Jonson  
happily secure.

And finally this poem, "Refrain," by Anders Osterling, published in 1956, which, though its rime scheme is as traditional as Wordsworth, has the expressionist technique of the blurred image. It may be freely translated:

In the silent evening glooming  
bright springtime in the village  
lilacs again are blooming  
around the barns and the tillage.  
All that is naked and sharpening  
is wrapped in a redolence strong,  
and like a key-fiddler's harping  
is the bird of twilight song.

Yes, the lilacs once more are blooming,  
their rapture the heart consuming,  
but stranger, you journeying here,  
What answers your heart this year?

# Lyric Aristocracy

The Younger Pliny

LOYD HABERLY

IN A MILLIONAIRE'S paradise the younger Pliny made poetry his devoted private business. Since childhood he had written verse, and contrived of it a habit in army outposts and courtroom lobbies and even in hunting-arbors where he awaited the driven deer. What he wrote he read aloud—for criticism rather than applause: "the silence of the audience, let it be intense, earnest, and desirous of hearing more, is as agreeable to me as the loudest approbation." Then he revised "or perhaps spoiled . . . by the delay of excessive revision." He pondered behind drawn shutters or paced his garden terrace, considering "word for word, even to the minutest accuracy of expression."

He was never too busy with public affairs to give less lucky poets a critical reading. To one of these he wrote: "You desire me to read your poems . . . and examine whether they are fit for publication. And you add entreaties. . . . But you do me wrong in supposing that I need either request or entreaty."

My old friend Quiller-Couch, of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, used to say that the smallest aristocracy in the world is made up of those who can appreciate poetry. So it was in the early years of our Second Century. Even the power and wealth and patronage of Pliny could entice few males to a poetry reading. Wrapped in their toga blankets, he shows them lounging—like so many Sitting Bulls—in the outer hall. Then "they saunter in with an air of the greatest indifference, nor do they condescend to stay through the recital, but go out before it is over, some slyly and stealthily, others again with perfect freedom and unconcern."

Well, that was their business. Urbane lawyer Pliny preferred hendecasyllables above "the gestures of the wanton, the pleasantries of the buffoon, or the extravagancies of the mummer," but it was his taste and not his judgment that pleaded against such sub-

Parnassan enjoyments. He reminded a complaining lover of lyrics that most men "think the entertainments with which you and I are most delighted no better than impertinent follies." Dividing his days between palatial town houses and country houses and sea-side houses, he worked out a way to live and let live that poets must forever envy.

Though the census that listed every Roman apartment did not enumerate lyricists, the evidence indicates that the whole lot of them could and did find cushioned sofa seats at Pliny's reading parties. He proudly admitted that "the authors have generally been friends of mine, as indeed there are few men of literary taste who are not."

Like our groundhogs, of which they were unwittingly ignorant, the Roman poets emerged when the high geese honked north again. Pliny almost purred as he penned, "during the whole month of April scarcely a day has passed on which we have not been entertained with the recital of some poem." Occasionally a wandering half-wit came in for the wine and cookies and expressed such loud amazement that public reciters were warned "to take care that the audience as well as the author are perfectly sane."

But amazement was better than apathy, wherefore the Pliny circle did not "restrain the force and impetuosity of genius within too narrow a compass." They dared the dizzy metaphor. "Have you not observed," Pliny asks, "what acclamation our tight-rope dancers excite at the instant of imminent danger? Whatever is most entirely unexpected, or . . . whatever is most perilous, most excites our admiration."

They risked the risqué too, upon the authority of the ancient bards, "who without scruple employed not only the warmest descriptions but the plainest terms." Pliny's lofty public employments made him coy in naughty composition, though he approvingly quoted the rule of Catullus: "True poets should be chaste, I know, / But wherefore should their lines be so?" Still there were those who "censured him in a free and friendly way" for "writing verses of the gayer sort." Against that charge he answered boldly: "I compose comedies, divert myself with pantomimes, read the lyric poets, and enter into the spirit of the most wanton muse, and . . . to sum up . . . in one word, I am a man."

What a man he was indeed, when the pen was plying! In Greek or Latin, ambidextrously, he versified in all forms and metres and upon all subjects—"love, hatred, satire, tenderness, politeness, and everything . . . that concerns life and the affairs of the world." Modestly he justified this variety: "I have attempted compositions of various sorts, as I could not expect to carry any particular one to its highest point of perfection."

To contemporaries, Pliny was no dabbling poetaster. Martial and Tacitus and Suetonius apparently considered his chances of breaking the time barrier as good as their own, if not better. Very sure and very happy "in the conscious anticipation of an . . . enduring name," he aimed his poems at us, down here, who only know him for his style-conscious letters about villas and ghosts and very early Christians. A fellow poet who was slow to publish had from him this solemn admonition: "Remember, my friend, the mortality of human nature, from which you can only preserve your own name by a monument of this sort; all other kinds . . . sink away and cease to be."

Pathetically the later Roman scribbled thus in the vast obscuring shadow of Vergil. Another of Pliny's friends—whose many villas "overflowed with books, statues and pictures"—so admired Vergil "that he celebrated the anniversary of that poet's birthday with more solemnity than his own."

Such post-mortem adoration is not assured to a poet by lofty purpose or persistent industry. Yet Pliny need not be accounted a failure merely because his birthday is forgotten. He had the friendship and praise of poets, and the generosity to repay them with consideration and good cold cash. At home he had a living fame in his lovely young wife Calpurnia. "When I recite my works," he wrote, "she conceals herself behind some curtain and drinks in my praises with greedy ears. She sings my verses too, adapting them to her lyre, with no other master but love, that best of instructors, for her guide."

Reading Pliny's account of her devotion, we can hear the lonely spirits of Homer and Vergil and Dante and Shakespeare sighing for what they missed.



# Towards a Total Conformity: A Metaphysical Fantasy

KENNETH BURKE

*Thoughts on the scholastic proposition that "good is the subject of evil," and on the opening sentence of the Nichomachean Ethics: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim."*

LET US BEGIN with such natural "conformity" as that of a stone which grows hot in the sun or cold in the shade, or of heated air rising above cold air, or of a seed lying dormant until it is placed in the conditions it needs for germination, whereupon if it is still alive it germinates. (If it is dead, it yields to the circumstances in a different way, but just as spontaneously and "lawfully," by undergoing the kind of changes "proper" to it as a dead seed.)

We may think of such purely physical or mechanical adaptability (or "conformism") as the basic principle of universal order, a principle whereby adjacent parts of nature "acquiesce" to one another, by variously adapting themselves to the conditions imposed upon them by their neighbors. Such unquestioning "readiness" of the parts to make allowance for one another by adjustments that take one another into account, would be like that arrangement which Leibniz called "preëstablished harmony." Or we might even call it a kind of "natural gallantry," or "automatic considerateness" on the part of things in their sociality as members of a single universal community. We might thus figuratively characterize the motions resulting from differently directed impulses.

In using such terms, that have connotations of thought and personality, we do not mean to imply a corresponding literal "awareness" or "attitudinizing" on the part of natural objects. It is not necessary that the stone should "want" to get hot when the sun

shines upon it (as if it were able to abide by the ideals of Kantian *wollen sollen*, willing exactly what it ought to, in voluntary obedience to the "laws" of nature). We do not mean to suggest that the stone experiences, as a positive "aim" or "purpose," the tendency to undergo exactly those changes which it does in fact undergo. We are not trying to read such soulfulness into nature. Nature may or may not be "alive" in this sense—but our present argument does not require that it be.

We have in mind simply the fact that *the equivalent of such natural adaptability*, when experienced in the realm of thought and personality, would be some such state of affairs as were factions to be reconciled without feuding, or as if we were able to accept without strain some situation which actually provokes in us great tension. We mean merely to suggest that the personal or ethical analogue of such a natural conformist principle would be adequately epitomized in the judgment that natural processes are "good" (not that they simply or neutrally "are," but that they "are good"); and such natural sociality or adaptability would be *like the unerring fulfilment of a purpose*, if such things were capable of experiencing what we experience as purpose.

The "psychological equivalent" of a bubble mechanically rising to the surface of a pond would be a correspondingly gratified desire on the bubble's part to reach the surface. Or if the bubble met an obstruction on the way up, as were it trapped beneath a piece of timber, the corresponding "state of mind" would not be a sense of "frustration," but a spontaneous desire to make itself at home in the new situation. It would be just as "gratified" to linger beneath the obstruction as it would be to resume its rise if the obstruction were removed. In its hypothetically Edenic world, it would "want" to do exactly what it actually does, by yielding in natural sociality to the conditions of its neighborhood.

By thus speaking of "inanimate natural processes" in animistic terms, we are trying to suggest, not that physical nature is thus inspirited, but that the conditions of natural sociality may have such a meaning "ultimately" for a species of organism like man which necessarily approaches nature through human attitudes.

However, our speculation is complicated by the dialectical fact

that, even if we hypothetically assumed such a condition of "goodness" in things' "spontaneous obedience to the laws of nature" (the universe's constant turn towards oneness), there is a corresponding natural condition of divisiveness. Thus, whereas in one sense the temperature of the blood stream is "natural," and even its rise when the body is diseased is a natural adaptation to conditions, in another sense the blood stream is in "rebellion" against the surrounding natural conditions, and acts to prevent the body from making such spontaneous acquiescence to the surrounding temperature as the stone would seem to have. Similarly, in the evolutionary process whereby organisms adapted themselves to the change from sea to land, the conditions of the sea may yet be retained antithetically to the environment, as with the sea-like conditions that the human body provides for the foetus in the placenta.

In fact, when thinking of the ways in which biologic organisms may be variously designed to *resist* natural conditions rather than merely yielding to them with the spontaneity of mountain rivulets on their way back to the maternal sea, we can even note how a similar principle applies also to the things of inanimate nature. For though the rock, in unerring dutifulness, grows warm in the sun, it does not carry its acquiescence to the point of becoming sunlight. And in this instance, plant-life could be called more "conformist" than the stone, since chlorophyll does contrive to "absorb" sunlight by incorporating sunlight into its very tissues, and so becoming in effect stored sunlight.<sup>1</sup>

There is the further possibility that the death of a biological organism could become "good" inasmuch as death relaxes the tendency of the organism to resist (or "rebel"). And conceivably, at the moment of "ultimate" yielding to death, each cell of the body

<sup>1</sup> Considered in itself, the principle of inertia could be said to involve a kind of spontaneous resistance, in the sense that a motion would continue unchanged unless modified or arrested by other factors. Or inertia could be said to involve a spontaneous yielding, if we stressed the fact that in changing, it would perfectly accommodate itself to the "terms" of the situation (as "determined" by the combination of internal and external factors). Spinoza's concept of *conatus*, the *endeavor* of an entity to maintain its being (*sum esse conservare*), is similar in design, since such an attempt to continue is always viewed in his system as the "negation" of the external elements that "determine" the entity's existence. *Conatus* is the psychological analogue of inertia. Or, in dramatic terms, *conatus* is to the realm of action what inertia is to the realm of motion.

would in its way experience a "revelation," a "new thrill," though regrettably the thrill would be of a sort that, by the nature of the case, could not be repeated. An added reason for believing in this possibility is supplied by the accounts that people have given who were near drowning or near freezing but were restored to consciousness.

If there were such a principle of "ultimate stabilization," if there were the lure of a sheerly mechanical or spontaneous sociality underlying biological resistances and calling for the organism's "return to a purely chemical nature" (a realm more rudimentary even than the possible appeal in imagery of a "return to the womb"), it should somehow operate as a "death wish," calling from beyond the organism and setting the term for the organism's unfolding (death thus in effect serving as the "purpose" or "final good" of life). And all the killings in the world of the living would add up to a symphony of sheer delight, as regards the multitudinous dying cells of the victims, to match the multitudinous cellular delight of the organisms whose bodies were digesting the victims. Once the stage of conscious suffering is passed, every single cell of the dying creature might have its own ecstatic subsidence, its "view of heaven," as the resistant unity of the agonizing self gave way to the multiplicity of cells, now all individually released for yielding into sociality of total physical adaptation. Thus, the pain of each kill would be outweighed by a pleasure of countless ultimate cellular yieldings, as with the poet's conceit that, at an ideal year's end, "worms and little crushed insects began feeling glad in the bellies of birds," though presumably also this reference was to the digested fragments' rebirth as parts of a new cellular organism.

Here is another likely interpretation of these notions:

(1) The individual man is to varying degrees a misfit with the norms of his society (and all the more so, since the norms are somewhat at odds with one another);

(2) To an extent he must suppress or control appetites that he might otherwise simply gratify (a situation further made paradoxical by the fact that often these appetites are intensified, or even made to seem imperious, by the same social norms that would suppress them);

(3) In the last analysis, such acts of self-control are experienced as "mortification," as a partial *slaying* of the appetites;

(4) Projecting such an attitude into a corresponding view of "nature" as its ground, man interprets the *socially*-engendered "mortification" as a *naturally*-engendered desire for such "death" as would amount to a sheer mechanical sociality, a spontaneous yielding, without conflict or resistance, to the "primal community" of whatever electro-chemical motions are implicit in biological functioning and underlie it as a "more perfect" state ("more perfect" in the sense that here all "laws" are "obeyed" automatically, without resistance, conflict, "rebellion," or "pride");

(5) The moment of transition from human sociality (with its factionalism) *via* biological sociality (of sheer cellular communities) back to a condition of purely mechanical sociality, is conceived as the vision of a "homecoming," flaring up ecstatically at the moment of its passing into extinction;

(6) The abandoning of resistance to social pressures is thus interpreted as grounded in the call towards a sheerly mechanical conformism (the organism's death thus being viewed as the "term" of biologic striving, the end which it is seeking as the principle of its development);

(7) But an end is a purpose, and a purpose is a "good" which is being aimed at;

Thus, the ideal sociality of natural processes would be interpreted not merely as a manifold of "neutral" processes, but as a *positive*, as "good." And thereby, in the applying of this *ethical* word to "inanimate" nature, one would, by a circuitous route, transform the principle of human-social "mortification" into the principle of nature itself; and one would be giving the "death wish" of such mortification the happiest of names: the "good."

## Exit Vachel Lindsay— Enter Ernest Hemingway

ALFRED KREYMBORG

THE DEATH OF VACHEL LINDSAY was the fourth in a line of suicides among my friends in the sphere of American poetry: George Sterling, Donald Evans, Sara Teasdale. To be followed in later years by Hart Crane, Orrick Johns, John Gould Fletcher. There was little one could say about suicide at any time. The causes were always mysterious to an outer world and conjecture superficial. Vachel's self-destruction was amazing in view of his jovial nature and inexhaustible energy. Those who knew him at all, or heard him in one of his endurance contests, must have felt the shock as a personal shock, or felt they had taken too much from the poet and given him too little in return. But how generous he was, too generous to ask for returns!

He would often ask the reception committee of a town in which he was scheduled to speak: "Are you the only organization here?" In short, if the woman's club had engaged him he wondered where the Kiwanis or Rotarians were, the college or high school, the Y.M.C.A., a workers' union, and any other group that held periodic meetings. For the same fee he agreed to recite for the ladies, Vachel would also address six or seven other meetings lasting six or seven hours altogether. Nothing quite so masonic had ever been known in America. The man from Springfield, Illinois, was a missionary as well as a galvanized troubadour. Something must have broken down in his "cornfed" physique, as he called it. So the spirit resigned.

Vachel's suicide was doubly shocking in view of his marriage to the youthful Elizabeth Lindsay and of the children born to them. Edgar Lee Masters, in his handsome volume on the poet, refers to persecution manias. But these shadows must have risen long before he settled down in Gulfport, Mississippi, where he lectured at the Junior College and met the lovely Elizabeth as a student. In a letter



from Gulfport dated February 1, 1923, and addressed to Witter Bynner, Lindsay revealed the state of his breakdown and the several reasons for that breakdown. A copy of the confession was mailed by Bynner in Santa Fe to Krimmie [Alfred Kreymborg].

The letter is one of the noblest utterances in the annals of our literature. At the heart of its many pages, the only condemnation is self-condemnation. Hal Bynner had written to Vachel pleading with him to conserve his strength, to be content with at most one appearance per day or, best of all, if he could possibly afford the financial forfeit, to forswear the platform altogether. I had seen other men sapped by it, including myself. At the close of a two-year tour, the exhausted minstrel replied: "I have had a perfectly enormous education in the map—the map of the U. S.—the 48 states of the Union—I know them now not infallibly, yet know them as I never expected to know anything—and for this knowledge I have certainly traded the two best years of my life and perhaps most of my brains forever! I had to undertake some kind of a large campaign or beg; no one was buying my books and no one buys them yet." And he adds genially: "Begging is really my natural function," reminding Bynner of the days when Vachel traded "rhymes for bread."

A pregnant passage attacks the curses of promotion: "The chunks and chunks of brash publicity hurled at me in each town forced me to build up in opposition an even more painful monster . . . The fun became a minor tragedy." He decides against all future platforms and, settling down near the Gulf of Mexico, requests: "Please tell every old and dearest friend to write to me here, and to state every complaint of me (I have never called myself a poet), and to give pages of shrewd advice as to the future of Poetry in America and how to snatch the news-stand from the clutches of George Horace Lorimer and give it to Homer, Milton and Thomas Jefferson, without ourselves getting just vulgar . . . I dearly love the United States. I have certainly parted with many a town where I wanted to kiss them all good-bye, they were all so good to me, and parting so hard. But in the end such tears wash body and soul and brain to nothingness—like losing the sea too long. But now I turn to the actual sea for strength and God help me to win it there." Not a word of censure, least of all toward Armstrong of Texas, the lecture

manager who managed his tours but who, according to the poet, had been taught by himself in the process. "I am almost a waif on this beach, with at least 2500 dollars in the bank—and, if ever well and rested, the lovely world indeed before me for my meditations and explorations. But I am wondering if I will ever be well and rested again?" A postscript concludes: "Tell everybody to write to me here, and to scold me, and forgive me everything."

The last time Krimmie saw Vachel Lindsay was just before that period. They had had some correspondence about a poem of Vachel's to be illustrated with hieroglyphs. The Springfield visionary, always over-modest about his work and never too certain either, had lunch with Krimmie in an inexpensive basement café. The *New Yorker* could afford the honor of playing host to this man and also to lend him some money to get through the rest of the day. One thing Vachel could never forgive Krimmie for printing in *Others* was the famous "Daniel Jazz" for which the poet suffered infamy at the hands of careless critics, even in England where he was dubbed "the jazz poet." All such nonsense was over now, for the dreamer was headed for Egypt, and more specifically the hieroglyphs at the Metropolitan Museum. He was illustrating his poems again and needed a richer symbolism. Would Krimmie go along?—of course he would!

At the museum, Vachel held forth on the supreme virtues of Egyptian art and instead of dealing in whispers, as the sacred halls demanded, harangued his auditor as if he were miles away. Again and again some attendant would caution the poet and the poet subsided for awhile. It is this harangue, this noble booming of the heart and lungs, Krimmie hears today above all whispers of the dust or the traffic of another world.

The loss of the most romantic pioneer of the pre-war generation occasioned more than average concern and reflection. On the one hand, the American world as a whole was ignorant not alone of contemporary poetry but of its classic poets from Bryant and Poe to Emerson, Whitman and Emily Dickinson. As a rule, they were consigned to school books hapless children had to study against their will. On the other hand, unless the poet had an income

or a job that gave him leisure to work on the side, he was tempted to court his public from platforms, a trail Lindsay blazed as early as 1906 through Southern farm communities. This was well in advance of Krimmie's first tour. Even without the warning of Lindsay's end, the younger poet had to guard against his own ebullience and be certain only to travel through necessity. There was danger as well in too much applause. When one returned to the home desk and further writing, one was tempted to listen to hands clapping in advance, not to the sole judge of real labor—private integrity.

Happily, and unhappily too, the day arrived when poets were no longer in demand and the public turned to the latest sensation. Even the popular Lindsay had been forced to notice that many an audience no longer sat through a full recital. The latest word was psychoanalysis. A horde of excellent mental physicians, and charlatans, many with a Viennese accent, tramped the boards of America, especially throughout those women's clubs furthering most of the destinies of our culture. Vachel had once said to Krimmie, loud enough for the feminine world to hear: "Hereafter, my friend, we shall have to ignore these women's clubs and turn to the colleges. That's where we belong." It was safe for Vachel to make this address. He had just staggered forth from a recital before a Los Angeles club Krimmie had to address the following afternoon. Meanwhile, after the psychoanalysts came the next brigade: muckraking historians and biographers. And finally today the teeming journalists. Birds of the latest World War who had flown abroad for their papers and could give first-hand accounts of the retreat from Dunkirk, or the heroism of the Greeks, or how Hitler frowned at Berchtesgaden. To compete with such glib rivals the poet had to grow sensational, a need Krimmie could never embrace. But the old story revived: One had to live somehow.

Thus it must have been with Vachel Lindsay. His creative spirit had withered at the source and revolted against his daily existence. It was easy enough for a man to break down if the principal sources of dependence were no longer endurable and for dark manias to seize and destroy the flesh. And easier still for analysts and biographers to fasten the ready phrase, persecution complex, on the grave

of the Springfield poet. Art has never been a soft job for sensitive beings, and without an inclusive sensibility there is no art. Critics who point at Lindsay now and dwell on his imperfections and sneer at his public virtues suffer from imperfections of their own. He, like Lincoln and Whitman, was a man of the people and, like any man of the people, suffered the imperfections of a race to which he devoted his grandest energies.

Like his great forebears, Vachel was now unaware of the curse that infested his people and kept them from being perfect. And like the great Victorian critics discredited now or laid away—Ruskin, Morris, and Arnold—he knew how much we need a perfect society to create the perfect artist. Hence his dream for Springfield, Illinois, as the future cultural center of his country. And he knew all about “the disinherited poor,” felt at home with this group and even advanced, in his own crude fashion, certain social principles in their behalf. Like Whitman he might have said: “Go with the powerfully uneducated.” Never a practised logician or propagandist, Lindsay said what he had to say in original music. *Vide* the quatrain—one of the greatest in our language—from “The Leaden Eyed”:

“Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,  
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,  
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,  
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.”

It was such a stanza that sent Krimmie back to the people. If he wasn't wanted in respectable circles, although he needed them to earn his way, there were other circles down below: workers who couldn't pay for recitals but whose need of communion equalled his. If one could no longer serve society from the top, it was because the top had grown parasitic and lived on the body of the average man, including the artist. The audience which had unwittingly destroyed Vachel Lindsay, first by accepting then rejecting him, was not the common people who needed education or the cultural entertainment which is a higher form of education. Bring these two powers together, the artist and his people, and culture would follow on a mutual floor. The ivory tower, of course, would go down in the shuffle. But when had Krimmie ever believed in ivory towers? Or

any escape from the mob the towers symbolized? Such an escape was not for Vachel Lindsay, not for Carl Sandburg, not for himself.

Krimmie thought with regret of an unrealized scheme these three troubadours had planned. They hoped to meet one day in their favorite haven, Chicago, and hire the largest auditorium for a minstrel show. Carl with his guitar, Krimmie with mandolite, and Vachel with the trumpet and drum his vocal organs embodied like a member of the Salvation Army. But the three gadabouts were never together at any one time—never in the flesh, only in spirit. And the author of "The Congo" is now beating his drum elsewhere.

ONE CHARMING forenoon Krimmie was unable to work and his good wife Dorothy gave him an early lunch to cure his cranky mood. He then decided on a good walk to top the cure and drifted toward the Washington Square Bookshop. He had to wrestle first with a crusty fellow named Conscience who seemed a century old and quoted maxims to force the mind back to labor, dull though that mind was. On the other hand there were Pagan maxims invented by the French who know how to live and have old cafés to revive the spirit. What had Matisse replied to an old friend who asked why he painted all the time? "Because I'm too lazy to do anything else!" Krimmie right now was lazy enough for anything but art. Having reached the bookshop he and his conscience parted at the door.

The shop had been moved from MacDougal to Eighth Street, the *Boul Mich* of the Village, and was no longer in the hands of Albert and Charles Boni. The gay editor of *Playboy*, Egmont Arons, was now in command aided by his charming wife, Josephine. Eggie or Eggplant, as he was affectionately known, was out when Krimmie dropped in, and Josephine was engaged with a burly customer. The poet started leafing over magazines and, like many a proverbial author, looked for his name somewhere among the reviews. No comment at all and columns about that famous agitator, T. S. Eliot. Suddenly he heard his name called as Josephine came forward to introduce the stranger. His name was Ernest Hemingway. As Krimmie shook hands with the giant, she added: "This man can



settle your problem for you. He knows all about New York publishers."

"Fine," said Hemingway, "I know him too. He's done a lot for young authors in the past." Then bluntly—"Have you had lunch?"

"Yes, a moment ago," said Krimmie. "But I'll be glad to sit down with you for some more coffee."

"I only have time for a bite," said Hemingway. "And what I need most is your advice." As they started toward a lunch room, he added: "Remember Hadley Richardson?"

Krimmie fished around his memory. "Oh yes—in St. Louis—the girl with the copper hair. Played the piano—played it well—"

"Yes. And I've heard her talk about you."

"How so?"

"She's married to me now, we're living in Paris."

Krimmie felt like shaking hands again but his right hand was still out of commission. And Hemingway was saying—"I have to get back by the first steamer. I'm booked to sail on that old tub the *Rochambeau* Saturday morning."

By this time, the pair were sitting at a quiet table and Krimmie's young host was ordering his "bite": a dozen oysters, ham and eggs, a whole mince pie and a bottle of milk. Krimmie took note of the unusual dimensions of this author. He wasn't as tall as Dreiser, yet big and swarthy, barrel-chested. And might have been taken for a stevedore, wrestler, bouncer. But he had a quiet voice, laconic manner. "How's your coffee, hot enough?"

"Yes, thanks."

"Then let's get down to business."

"Go ahead."

"I've never had trouble earning money," Hemingway began. "But I need it in a hurry now. Fifteen hundred dollars for a year's freedom to complete the novel I'm working on."

Krimmie blinked at the sum. It was audacious. "What is the book called?"

"*The Sun Also Rises*."

Hemingway went on to say that he had received letters from two publishers who were after his next book. And he was in town to talk to them in turn.



"Which two?"

"Scribner and Harcourt, Brace."

Krimmie whistled. Harcourt was the man who had rejected *Troubadour* with "No author's life is worth a tinker's damn."

"Go on," said Krimmie. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"I'm still under contract with the man who brought out my first book."

"Liveright?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I've read *In Our Time*. It had a fine press but a poor sale. I'll never forget that play about Christ and the Roman soldiers."

"Thanks. But my second book didn't sell either. Do you know Sherwood Anderson?"

"Yes. A beautiful man who writes beautiful stories."

"You can say that again," said Hemingway. "Have you read *The Torrents of Spring*?"

"No, but I've heard about it at the Liveright office."

"Did they tell you how sore Sherwood was about my parody?"

"Yes," said Krimmie. "But parody's an implied compliment."

"Yes, but Sherwood's older than I, there's the rub. My first influence in writing stories. I had to get him out of my blood."

"Have you seen Horace since your return?"

"A few days ago."

"What did he say?"

"He was perfect, though patronizing. Handsome about releasing me from our contract—gave it gladly."

The youthful author looked like a shrewd veteran. Then turned to finish his mince pie. The shrewd Krimmie gathered his wits. There must be some plausible reason for favoring Scribners over Harcourt. Luckily he remembered that Hemingway, like Ezra Pound before him, had a penchant for using four-letter words. This was the point to be stressed.

"What's on your mind?" asked Hemingway.

"The question seems to be or not to be which house you call on—Scribners or Harcourt—the old or the young. Do they know you're in town?"

"Yes."

"Does it mean that the first you call on will sign you up and let you sail on Saturday?"

"Yes, with the check I need."

Krimmie whistled at such assurance. "Well, since this needs settling at once I'm in favor of the older house, the respectable Scribners."

"Why?"

"Because of your four-letter words. They're not the whole story but there they are."

Hemingway lit a cigarette. "Suppose Scribners ask me to cut them out and I refuse?"

"Though I've never dealt with them," said Krimmie, "I think they'll leave you alone once they've got you. Like any firm they're interested in money too."

"Go on," said Hemingway.

"If you lost your temper at Scribners and turned to a modern house your words would shock readers more than they would if the house had a classic, a virtuous imprint."

Hemingway stared with frank admiration. "How did a poet like you learn so much about business?"

"I had to," said Krimmie. "I've been through the mill as a human being. And rather than see other men tread that mill one does what one can."

"I see," Hemingway, calling the waiter for the check. As the conspirators arose, he added: "I'll let you know at once what happens at Scribners."

"I have a phone, you'd better call me there."

After the two men parted, Krimmie went straight home, back to his study. Along toward three in the afternoon the phone rang and the excited Krimmie heard an excited voice: "Thanks, old man, I'll never forget you."

"Did everything work?"

"Yes," said Hemingway. "It's okay, O.K. I got the check, so long—"

"And so long to you . . ."

Krimmie never saw the cordial Hemingway again—except

in print and through letters urging some young author to call on the poet for advice. One of the first to call was Morley Callaghan, the fine Canadian novelist. And Krimmie was in for a surprise after *The Sun Also Rises* appeared. There in its vivid pages he recognized some of his Parisian cronies of the *Broom* period, notably the hero of the novel, Harold Loeb, or "Cohn" as he was nicknamed by the novelist. Harold, with his yen for publicity, was not offended by Hemingway's satire, for the book was the talk of our time abroad and at home. Even the minor characters had been perfectly drawn, among them the wonderful cuckoo, Donald Ogden Stewart. And drinking that started on almost every page of *The Sun Also Rises* rose to still greater proportions at cafés where more than one little Hemingway author was born. As the novel began to sell in the thousands and thousands, Krimmie tried to compute how many thousands of dollars had been lost to the head of a house whose heartless epigram had gotten under his skin and made him develop an elephantine memory.

Some time later, that elephant heard the amusing sequel to the Scribner chronicle—one that is known in literary circles but not by the general public. And Krimmie heard it not through gossip or hearsay but "straight from the horse's mouth" of Maxwell Perkins, editor of the firm and famous for his invaluable aid to such varied figures as Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and later James Jones, author of *From Here to Eternity*.

Krimmie met the editor just once—an occasion embarrassing to both, especially Perkins. The poet had never breathed a word, neither had Hemingway, about the hidden hand which had netted so much money for Scribners, with large and larger sums on other books ahead. On the day he called by appointment at the house on Fifth Avenue and was ushered into a small sanctum, Krimmie felt sorry for the little man who looked so sorry for him. Perkins had formed the habit, even during office hours, of tilting a soft gray fedora from one side of his head to the other. And seemed to be shy or evasive with a caller who was there to receive a manuscript Scribners had rejected: a book of sonnets entitled *The Lost Sail*. A fidgety hand kept fluttering back to the hat to tilt it again. To break the news to Krimmie gently, Perkins referred to the book as

one of the best books of verse he'd ever read. And tried to console him by adding that only the other day the firm had asked him to return Conrad Aiken's latest manuscript—"a beautiful narrative" by a man the firm had published hitherto. "How can I write a letter to such a sensitive artist?" Perkins asked.

"I'm an old friend of his," answered Krimmie. "The best thing you can do is to tell him the truth. If you've read his reviews, you'll find how truthful he is. Not even his friends escape Conrad's scalpel."

Maxwell Perkins arose, coughed a little and held out *The Lost Sale* (as Krimmie now dubbed it). But the poet, charmed by the editor's courtesy, wanted to know what had happened at Scribners after the manuscript of *The Sun Also Rises* arrived. "Good Lord, don't mention it!" said Perkins. The good man took off his hat, put it on again, sat down, gave vent to a Yankee chuckle.

"What happened, Mr. Perkins, I won't repeat it?"

"Oh, I daresay it's all over town. Or will be soon."

"In that case I might as well hear it," said Krimmie.

"Good, I'll tell it to you, you'll understand." And the smiling editor told the tale, not only truthfully but with obvious relish.

After the dreaded script arrived and was read by responsible members of the firm, it was decided that the monosyllabic four-letter words must be discussed. And by the author and editor privately before the work went to press. Hemingway, with whom Perkins had corresponded from time to time, was now a tough customer one would have to handle with great care. Happily or not, he was in town again and an appointment made for him to join the editor at luncheon. The growingly nervous Yankee had used the nearest pad to jot down the exact words that must be discussed. After Hemingway's arrival, the usual small talk began in Perkins' sanctum. The editor wished to lead his formidable guest toward safer ground in advance of the coming contretemps. But Perkins lost all self-control and said: "Suppose we go out now? There's a quiet little restaurant round the corner which serves French food and French wines."

"Okay," said Hemingway.

The two men arose and left. But the absent-minded editor had

neglected to tear that slip off the pad and take it along. Presently, the head of the old house, Charles Scribner, a distinguished gentleman with a handsome beard, wandered into the sanctum and looked around. There was no one in the room, not even the secretary. Naturally, Mr. Scribner referred to his editor's calendar to find out where he was at this particular moment. The pad was headed *Things To Do Today*. The long narrow list of penciled notes followed. Since Ernest Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* had dropped all four-letter words for the polysyllabic "obscurity," one has to follow his order in the present tale:

Obscurity I

Obscurity II

Obscurity III

etcetera.

## Return Now to the Valley

KAYE STARBIRD

Return now to the valley, where you caught  
Only a glimpse of stars, once, climbing up.  
Even for you, the sun's the sun—and not  
A penny dropped at evening in a cup.  
Remember, winds blow in the crowded places,  
And rains fall, too, whether or not you care.  
You have outlived all triumph up where space is,  
When you forgot the climb that took you there.  
Return now to the valley, where you grew.  
Heights, like the towns, can own you, given time;  
And in the lowlands, men as strong as you  
Have learned to live with hills they could not climb.  
—Go quickly, then, before you cannot go  
Back where you once looked upward from below.

## Lesson in the Monkey House

JOHN HOLMES

On a green June day at the public animal farm,  
The monkey-house was alive with human alarm.  
Before I could smell, shouts seemed to mean harm.

Then the noise had a level above danger, of delight  
Howled, hurled, and a level below, of shove and fright,  
And of stumbling and bumping in a big room at night.

It was boys and men bedevilling a black baboon.  
He danced their dance, he in mahogany hewn,  
Their flesh caricaturing his half-human cartoon

Of their ape-thrashing, ape-screaming, old stone age  
Hullabaloo, happy to battle at last the outrage  
Of being on whichever side of the bars of a cage.

What one lost in dignity, the other made,  
In mutual and fortissimo serenade.  
But the women lugging children were afraid.

Their feet shuffled an undertone of woe,  
That dull distrust of men all women know.  
They were no help to us, but would not go.

Whatever woman's work, it is not to see  
That this is man's world, full of man manfully  
From himself forever struggling to be free.

I elbowed in, because nobody understood  
What I meant. I had to yell as loud as I could.  
When he made faces, I made one twice as good.

Try and get in, he said. Try and get out,  
We said. Who wants to get out, he yelled. Our shout,  
His scream, you, you, was what it was all about.



Thus what had seemed unseemly stink and storm,  
With a little thought became man's noble norm,  
On a green June day at the public animal farm.

## Accident Room

(Johns Hopkins Hospital)

PHILIP BOOTH

Tabled below the glucose drip (bottle to tube  
to needle, and the needle in my arm), I lie  
in the sterile doom of a white-walled room  
with nine neighbors not mine to judge or save.  
Not judge the big drunk with a slit black back,  
nor save the old woman whose broken-brained fits  
cry a thin curtain away. They want Christ's tears  
more than whole blood; even the awkward boy  
who tried to trade Alive for Dead, but forgot,  
and only shot off the high left half of his head.  
The nurses crackle as they walk from case to case,  
the white young interns gather, scenting death  
on a cough-choked lunger's breath. I share  
his patient fear, fear and share adrenal hate,  
want love, and pray myself to slow doped sleep,  
safe on the streets outside in dream's delirium:  
safe that dark election night with limp Poe,  
cursing the fog, and both left gutter-drunk,  
counting the white stoops row on Baltimore row.

## Poor Town

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

Odor of tortilla and tamale,  
bite of José's tequila, spice of peppers,  
fire of Mexico: these, and the tubbed scent,  
warm water and bargain soap, are the flavors of Dolores;  
and best, and always, the incomparable perfume of babies.  
Noise of her five-man, swift, disordered army,  
of Angelina tugging at her skirt,  
of Jesus wailing in five brothers' crib,  
disturb her not. She puts the hot food on,  
and lifts a dropped fork, lifts while laughing  
when glad José, in man's play, slaps her bottom.  
Angelina she lifts to her yellow highchair;  
her tiny Jesus is quieted at her bosom.

Odor of night-damp flowers is Dolores  
facing the moonlight by her bedroom window,  
naked and still as the art that they all had seen  
in the free-admission, open-to-the-public show.  
"You are like that prize—so beautiful!—Dolores."  
She answers her man with the lowering of lashes.  
"But you know, my woman," softly whispers José,  
"you are no statue." He hushes his teasing laughter,  
gesturing toward the small room and small sleepers.  
She turns, and turns from him; then girlish-swift,  
she goes to bed. Dolores closes her eyes—  
the Son and His mother in the Woolworth frame above her—  
and she covers herself with a sheet as white as lilies.

## Poems by Eli Siegel

### The Little Cube in Space

Somewhere in space  
A cube of air  
When thought of is  
Quite debonair.

The little cube  
Is not, unless  
It has our thought  
And friendliness.

### Candor Will Be Mine

We aim to please the ladies that wander down these balustrades. Careful also of the satisfaction of the balustrades are we. We know that merry-go-rounds come to an afflicted earth, and not for many earths would we afflict merry-go-rounds.—When, candidly, one tells us he doesn't like balustrades, we just as candidly, and more quickly, tell him he does. For it is only polite to do this. Candor is just one of an innumerable group of virtues, and the groups are innumerable. Novels are written to aid candor. Ladies walk down balustrades to aid candor. And what are knees for?—to aid candor. The parallel construction is more than inevitably contingent on the circumstances. When merry-go-rounds come to balustrades, and all ladies are candid; and the haze that exists slowly of mornings candidly accompanies our candid eyes; and hearts are candidly gay; and all adverbs are candid and all adjectives are; and when revolutions occur because candor is lacking; and research is candid; and hey, all heys are; and huzzas—Oh, me, candor will be mine.

## A Hundred Plants on an Estate

You know there are a hundred  
Plants on that estate; and some morning  
When it is quiet, let us, you and I, Dora,  
Go there and look at them.  
You may, if it pleases you, touch the twenty-fifth  
We notice; you may touch the fortieth.  
The forty-first you may touch with your lips.  
Such wonderful vegetation is on this estate.  
If you stay long enough, you may  
See the moon from a place on this estate.  
You may, standing near one of the plants,  
Distinguish a definite part of the somewhat lighted air.  
You may hear sounds standing on this estate  
At two o'clock in the afternoon; and at two o'clock at night  
You may hear the wind moving trees and grass.  
Indeed, this estate possesses  
Such admirable natural belongings.  
Imagine now: you can touch green on it,  
Look at red,  
Look at yellow.  
Walking, you may view pink.  
This pink estate is highly magnificent, surely.  
Surmise any color,  
And this estate, you may surmise, can have it.  
Surmise any plant that Spain has  
And this estate, you may conceive, can have its like.  
This estate has noble European parallels.  
It is envied by magnifico after magnifico.  
It is a glorious possession, set amidst boiling ocean.  
It is the frenzied, comely point of a furious, godlike process.  
It is night's dearest content, to which it is like a strawberry  
to a strawberry,  
One green leaf to one green leaf.  
It is infinitely commendable, and it is, Harold,

Luscious, luscious, luscious; luscious, as berries suffused  
by ethereal cream,  
Suds softened by the interposition of unerring divinities.  
This estate is English,  
And when English moons, English tongues, English words  
Are about,  
Then, Harold and Dora,  
It is at its boilingest,  
Its most immensely proud,  
This to be visited, visited,  
Lying softly, daringly, abidingly,  
Possessed estate,  
Which we shall visit  
Tomorrow, after careful preparing.

### Through Winds

Oh, you would cry, tree in autumn,  
As the wind went through you that October,  
With green under you and the wind.  
You would cry, tree in autumn,  
Where once, led by her father, going west,  
A child moaned a little, fidgeting.  
O, tree of Missouri,  
O, tree of autumn in Missouri,  
Some years ago,  
With every autumn you cry, with every autumn  
winds go through you.  
You would cry, for so are things, so is existence,  
so are you, so am I.  
And the little child came to Oregon, from Kentucky,  
through Missouri, through autumn, through winds.

## Critical Afternoons of Once

ELI SIEGEL

DEEP WITHIN EVERYONE is a desire to be seen right: which is accompanied with a fear. In a certain sense, a poem is like a woman, wanting to be understood, but fearing some of the attendances of being understood. Still, a poem at its deepest is like the heroine of a Henry James novel, dear to the novelist because she exemplifies that most subtle and tremendous of human hopes—the hope of being imaginatively and accurately seen. Milly Theale, Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer are, in their way, like poems looking for comprehension. Critics are like husbands or lovers having the obligation to see and to keep on seeing.

In the same way as women have felt they weren't seen, poems could likewise complain. And, likewise, as women have been flattered to their detriment, so poems can be thought of too encomiastically. And this is a poetic misfortune.

The writer of a poem has a job, too. It is hard to see something close to one exactly, or, as the men of science say, objectively. A complaint is always to be looked on with some suspicion. Complaints are risky, and they have an ignoble air. There are, however, occasionally, facts clearly existing in an intimate field. Some facts relating to poems, embellished, I trust, by germane and not-misleading comment, are given here.

There is, first, "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana." That poem was ardently written in February 1924. In December 1924, it was sent to the *Nation* in the customary way. It was sent back. It was sent again in the same month for the Poetry Prize Contest then being conducted by the *Nation*. In January 1925, I was informed it had won the prize. It can be said factually, soberly, that fate here was quite strange.

And so the poem appeared in February 1925. What a discussion! Literary people seemed enraged. Ludwig Lewisohn wrote from Vienna that he was disappointed with the judges, and,



quoting Boswell's Johnson, said anyone could write this stuff if he "abandoned himself to it." Upton Sinclair wrote two letters of sorrow from California. Maxwell Bodenheim told of how hurt he was by the choice. William Ellery Leonard also seemed intricately displeased.

Other people said in print all kinds of objurgatory things. In April 1925, James Stevens, author of *Mattock* and *Paul Bunyan*, wrote in the *Nation* that he had never seen such a "ganging up." All this can be seen in the letter columns of the *Nation* of March and April 1925. It is now there.

This sort of criticism was bewildering. I did not come across then or later any consideration of the poem in terms of what it was going for and what the lines actually did; there was no asking of *how* the lines were related to each other. I suppose I was taken aback. I suppose I retreated into the quieter aspects of permanent culture. I can suppose and suppose.

I found out later that some of the things said conversationally were also quite unusual; often of a novel bitterness. In the early pages of Vardis Fisher's *No Villain Need Be* (1936), a present day reader can find a little colloquy on "Hot Afternoons"—which is in the novel given a wrong title. I gather, from what I heard later, that the poem was taken by many people as a personal offense.

In 1925 the poem was having an effect on the population as such, an effect which wasn't ordinary. I saw, myself, a sign on a Baltimore trolley car reading: HOT AFTERNOONS ARE NOT IN BAY SHORE. I was told the Marx Brothers used the title of the poem as a kind of catch-line. It was worked on for quite a long time by sports writers ("Sad Afternoons Have Been at the Yankee Stadium," etc.). Something like the title would pop forth from the most unexpected mouths on the least expected occasions. There were a couple of hundred parodies in newspapers and elsewhere: Dull Mornings Have Been in New York; Sizzling Afternoons Have Been in Seattle; Cold Nights Have Been in Bensonhurst; and so on. There is a long parody of the poem in William Rose Benét's *Wild Goslings*—it first appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature*—and Mr. Benét, somewhat churlishly, gave no hint of the *provenance* of his piece. I think it can be said without weep-

ing on one's sleeve that the customary courtesies were in abeyance; were not much around in relation to the *Nation* Prize Poem.

The question remained: What, in the name of the Muses and the Lord, was the poem really about? What was it doing? How was it constructed? Upton Sinclair said it was in some outlandish English, but—like many others—he didn't ask himself what was happening in the poem. In his literary life, Mr. Sinclair has had just occasion to complain of incomprehension; but as is well known in the history of ethics, we can commit with one part of ourselves what another part complains of as done to us: and this can go on simultaneously. It is all part of the darksome duality of persons and critics.

So what was the poem about? I see the poem as a sustained interaction of a bright afternoon as real, intensely looked at, and the meaning of the whole universe as permanent and various. I can remember that a universe which was awesome, secret and gliding, seemed to show itself in a whole set of surprising and interrelated forms and happenings. That is the way it still seems.

I am afraid there was a disposition to see the writer of "Hot Afternoons" as a One Poem Man. Upton Sinclair, reading the biographical note which accompanied "Hot Afternoons" in the *Nation*, decided somehow that I was an "immigrant boy" who didn't know English. Mr. Sinclair seems to have given the cue to others. As I look back on that biographical note, I see it as unfortunate. It presented me as some primitive being who, for some unaccountable reason, had got a poetic vision which he could hardly manage. Anyway, he got it once, and once only. Illumination had come to some Baltimore cave; and never came again. I was a One Round Poet, and shouldn't go into the ring again.

Surely all this wasn't so. The poem was written in Jones Street, New York, and it was written at a time when I had a careful and pleased sense of John Dryden, Matthew Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, George Saintsbury, and even less known non-primitives. Literarily, I was more decorous, "classical," then than now. In 1924, for example, I did not see Walt Whitman as so aesthetically big. I felt his sense of the line was uncertain. I saw a quality in Alfred Tennyson and in Alexander Pope which I did not see in *Leaves of Grass*.

These last observations are made because of the recurrent critical statement or hint that "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" was Whitmanic, had the Bard of Camden and Brooklyn as a guide and inspiration. Certainly I knew of Whitman at this time; but I remember being dissatisfied with the cadences of, say, "By Blue Ontario's Shore"; and poems like that. Of mysticism I was more suspicious then than now. So, while not being exactly mortified with the finding of a relation between "Hot Afternoons" and Whitman, I deeply knew that it wasn't there. There were other matters, though, that sent me sprawling more sadly.

Alfred Kreymborg recently told me of how, as it appears to him at present, he "missed the boat" in 1925. I gather from what Mr. Kreymborg said and from other material that there was a great hesitation to see the poem "Hot Afternoons" *simply as a poem*.

It had caused a commotion in America as such, but somehow the commotion was used as smoke to justify one in not looking beyond the commotion. I think there was timidity. I think there was an unwillingness to place the poem.

Justification for what I have just said can be found in the Letter to Martha Baird of William Carlos Williams, printed in the book, *Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana: Poems*, of 1957. Should the letter of Dr. Williams be read closely, intimations, I believe, will be found of some unusual poetic history. It is my hope, in general, that the letter be read as closely as possible. What, for instance, does Dr. Williams mean when he describes critics as "sclerotic"?

This particular presentation of some poetic history, though factual, is also meant to capture some past emotion; and so I think it well to bring in at this point, Mr. Henry L. Mencken. I think much of Mr. Mencken simply as an American writer; simply as a literary energy, a humorous force. I know, however, that Mr. Mencken, with all his audacity, was very timid as to poetry and almost tearfully inadequate. When "Hot Afternoons" in 1925 won the *Nation* Prize, I was in Baltimore. The city was in something of an uproar. Letters like those written to the *Nation* appeared in the *Baltimore Sunpapers*. The letters were sarcastic, disparaging.

Like the *Nation* letters, they conveyed a sense of astonishment that any poem like "Hot Afternoons" could be printed, let alone win a prize. Any Baltimore nephew aged  $4\frac{1}{2}$  could do as well. There was this disparaging uproar—within which, it should be said, was some encomium, some defense; it was a large Baltimore matter: and Mr. Mencken said not a word.

One may ask why should Mr. Mencken say anything? However, if we remember how much the author of *The American Language* was intent on keeping up with Baltimore developments and how unwilling he was to keep out of anything which stirred the Baltimore citizenry, it will seem proper to ask, Where was Mr. Mencken in all this? And the answer is: He was scared. He was not in his element. He could say something nice, useful about Lizette Woodworth Reese, but this poem was too much for him. Prudently, he wrapped himself in the shadows of his Hollins Street home and in the brightness of his New York office. Like all literary people, he could have his prudences, his velleities.

The book, *Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana: Poems*, contains 139 poems, of many dates. I deal with one more which has had a history.

In 1925 I did some reviewing for the *Literary Review* of the *New York Evening Post*. In the autumn of 1925, I talked with Mr. Walter Yust of the *Literary Review*. In his column, there was a report of the interview. There was comment on the fact of how literate I seemed, how chummy with Matthew Arnold. And in this interview was embodied a very short poem I had arrived at with most serious intent. This poem was "One Question" and consisted of:

I—  
Why?

As far as I knew, there was no shorter poem in the English language. My surmise and the poem itself were presented by Mr. Yust in the *Literary Review*. The poem got around. It seems that Elias Lieberman of the New York City school system quoted it as the shortest poem in the English language. Authority for this statement can be found in Max J. Herzberg's school anthology of

poetry, *Off To Arcady* (American Book Company, 1933, page 480). In an anthology and critical work, *Poetry: Its Appreciation*, edited by Louis Untermeyer and Professor Davidson, the poem appears with a title created by the editors and a most unflattering annotation. One could imagine from this work that it seemed the only way to look at a very short poem was to see it as a *jeu d'esprit*; something to show off with. I know that the poem came as an intense summation of the puzzlement which faces every being with consciousness; that is, every person. And it is my opinion that Mr. Untermeyer was careless, too "smart" in the way he dealt with this poem. Later there was some inquiry as to the authorship of "I—/Why?" in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

I believe that had "One Question," like "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana," been given the customary literary courtesy, all the mystery as to who wrote it would never have come to be. At the present time, this hurtled poem appears in a humorous context in the *Silver Treasury of Light Verse*, edited by Oscar Williams, and in its original "serious" context in the book, *Hot Afternoons*.

Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana, as a phrase, has been included in recent editions of *Bartlett's Quotations*. It is in the paper edition of Bartlett, edited by Kathleen Sproul, PermaBooks. For some reason I was not given any date. I wrote to Kathleen Sproul about this, and I was told that she and her office had seen me as some kind of "myth." Unquestionably, there is some moral here.

Though not "squarely" remembered, the poem was remembered. This is instanced by John Gunther's using, in 1947, the title to head his chapter on Montana in *Inside U.S.A.*

In 1951, William Carlos Williams wrote the letter I have mentioned. With this letter, "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" and the other poems began to be seen with some critical centrality.

"Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" and "One Question" and all other poems ask—as I said the women of Henry James ask—that they be seen as they are, in their oneness and in their diversity. "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana," if it is a poem, is an instantaneous existence of logic and emotion. Its purpose is to show the world as saddening and electrifying pleasing. There

is an abiding sense in it of the historical pangs of laborious man; but it is not a "sociological" poem as Eda Lou Walton once intimated in the *Nation*. It is not a mystical poem. It is not a rambling poem. It is not Whitmanic. It arose, as I see it, because something insisted on being said truthfully, but with a music of its own. If this is not so, then I, as critic, am mistaken.

With 1958, there is a chance of "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" and its fellow-poems being seen as they are. If it is not improper in this piece to say so, certain signs of this reconsideration have recently taken place. Notable is Selden Rodman's review in the *Saturday Review* of August 1957.

Yes, "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana" has been like a *femme incomprise*, like a woman hardly known, as she often is in novels and in life. And now I see "Hot Afternoons" smiling. All poems smile; and if "Hot Afternoons" was a real poem, it was smiling all the while. But I think you can see its smile now.

## The Question

ELI SIEGEL

How is creaking possible  
In an ethical world  
Is a question once asked  
By a London child  
Who later went to Paris  
And stayed there in the summer  
Of 1853; and did not meet  
Mrs. Browning—though that was possible:  
The creaking did not get that far  
Not being that possibility just yet,  
And the story is not over,  
The question not adequately asked.



# Proteus as Apollo: The Poetry of Merrill Moore

ROY P. BASLER

## A PREFATORY NOTE

"Proteus as Apollo: The Poetry of Merrill Moore" was written between May and August, 1957, before I knew, and I believe before Merrill knew, that the terribly swift onset of cancer would cancel his abundant life within a few weeks after I had completed the writing. The friendship which led him to suggest that I write it, and me to accept his suggestion, was such that I felt no qualms whatever about what I might find necessary or desirable to say by way of criticism. Merrill's friends span the globe because his capacity for friendship was larger than that of most men, and yet each of his friends seems to have felt some peculiar personal property in the expansive spirit of this man as revealed in his personality no less than in his poetry. Upon this claim of mine, I staked the spirit of friendly satire mixed with friendly admiration in which I wrote "Proteus as Apollo."

Although we were corresponding more or less regularly from May to August, the first knowledge I had of Merrill's illness came in his letter written on August 12, which told of his operation a few days earlier for "a malignant growth." Following an exchange of letters on August 14 and 19 in which Merrill cheerfully expressed the feeling that he was "getting a little strength back," I mailed him a carbon copy of the completed article on August 23, the day before I left for three weeks vacation in Wyoming.

Upon returning from vacation on September 15, I found a letter from Merrill, dated August 28, together with the copy of the manuscript, which carried a few of his comments penciled in the margin in answer to queries I had placed for his special attention. The letter begins as follows:

Mrs. Moore and I have read "Proteus as Apollo" out loud and we just roared. I have never read such sharp and perceptive criticism. You are right on the ball, my friend, and I believe I have enough insight to realize that there is a great deal of truth in what you have to say and I like it. It is interesting, provocative and highly original. I feel greatly honored that you took on this task and I want to thank you for doing it.

My reply written on September 18, I suppose he never read, for on September 20 he died.

Whatever merit the article may or may not have, its levity treads with heavy feet today. There is a peculiar sorrow in the jests at Merrill's prolific abundance, which he himself so delightfully satirized in the sonnet "Plentiful? I?" Yet I feel sure Merrill would not have me alter the levity or blunt the satire.

Who can measure such a man?

**A**MONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES Merrill Moore has certainly not been the poet most neglected by serious criticism, although it is true that none of his later books has received the attention from reviewers which was accorded to *The Noise that Time Makes* (1929), and in fact the "highbrow" poetry journals have neglected to notice most of his volumes at all. His poetry has been the subject of extended essays in the quarterlies, however, by his friends Louis Untermeyer, Henry W. Wells, and Dudley Fitts, and of a book by Henry W. Wells, *Poet and Psychiatrist, Merrill Moore, M.D.* (1955). For an extended discussion of Moore's themes, subjects, predilections, and compulsions, I am happy to refer the reader to Mr. Henry Wells. Although it is likely that his will not be the last word on the blend of science and imagination, the analysis of fear, the analysis of love, or the analysis of death which is to be found in Moore's poems, I certainly could not do a more sympathetic exposition in less space than he has done in his book. I therefore will try to attend to the primary question: What kind of and what quality of poetry does Moore write?

Reading Moore's poems, *passim*, is something like reading a newspaper in verse, an Olympian sort of *Modern Times*, which is reported, edited, and published by an Ed Howe (or a John Trotwood Moore) who got born fifty years too late, was diverted into psychiatry, and who took the U.S.A. for his metropolis, right along

with him into the front seat of his automobile (or Pullman berth) when he went, or into his office (or den) when he stayed, and who somehow wrote everything in units of fourteen lines, or thereabouts. To carry the analogy a bit further, the contents of this Olympian news and gossip medium is reportorial first, editorial second, and in the truly liberal vanished tradition of another day is rarely or never guided by the money that runs the place and is doing this job "in the public interest" for the ulterior purpose of moving readers toward or away from something which is more or less (often less) clearly understood, though its attractiveness is always appreciated.

Again, reading Moore's poetry is like reading a sort of Parnassian *Reader's Digest*, wholly rather than partly written to order, by a remarkable stable of Heliconian hacks assembled for the purpose of getting out a Twentieth Century Issue that will preserve for all time the essence of *It*, triple distilled occasionally, but always at least once, through the editorial worm which turns sensations and ideas in rough draft into acceptable copy, not always at the recommended temperature, but refined sufficiently to provide an effective stimulant. The ingredients of the digested articles are always of "human" interest, and although they seem clearly to have been written by different hands (minds?) they have had one editor who did things (frequently not well advised) to what had already been done, as Henry Mencken was said to have revised the articles he accepted for the *Mercury*, to make them *more so*!

On a somewhat higher elevation, reading Moore persistently and continuously is something like, also, reading the *Journal* of a twentieth century Nathaniel Henry Waldo Moore who left Nashville, Tennessee (and literature) to rusticate in Boston, chopping clinical wood or spreading clinical manure, all the while observing, noting, meditating (quickly) and concluding (tentatively) in entries of fourteen lines, more or less. One may find Nathaniel's shrewd observations of people and places, Henry's thorough mysticism mixed with some Tennessee truth, and Waldo's natural impiety rephrased in the language of modern incidentalism in such a poem for example as the sonnet "Nothing can be too damnable or odd/ To suit the ancient cleverness of God. . . ."

This game of authors may be played more seriously. Coleridge played it with Shakespeare and Sophocles, observing that "times and manners lend their form and pressure to genius." So Shakespeare is to Sophocles as Westminster Abbey is to the Pantheon, as diversity is to unity. Shakespeare, like Westminster Abbey, comprised in Coleridge's view "a multitude of interlaced materials great and little, magnificent and mean . . . and yet so promising of our social and individual progression that we would not, if we could, exchange it for that repose of the mind which dwells in the forms of symmetry in the acquiescent admiration of grace."

What then of Merrill Moore? Shall we say he is to Shakespeare as the Empire State Building is to Westminster Abbey? Hardly, but, and preferably, I suggest, as an uptodate suburban shopping center is to Westminster Abbey: sensible, uniform (approximately), efficient, utilitarian, with everything available that one ever thought of and quite a few things that have been thought of for him by someone else, and withal so definitely within reach, useful, informative, and stimulating that even if it leaves us restless and dissatisfied we would not exchange it, if we could, for whatever grandeur and interlaced magnificence. But somehow I cannot say this with the entire confidence that Coleridge had about not exchanging Shakespeare for Sophocles. Why?

Without benefit of Freud, Coleridge maintained that the poet's true genius lies in his unconscious activity, where poems grow, rather than are made, as a fusion of external and internal in which "the conscious is so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it." This creative imitation as opposed to mere copying of nature is perhaps what one finds all too seldom in Moore. For the most part he writes off the top of his mind, consciously, often accurately, intelligently, and cleverly, but also often carelessly and superficially. This is not only true when he is writing of people and things observed, analyzed, and understood (appreciated), but also when he is projecting self in a symbol or series of symbols. His ability as a psychiatrist is everywhere suggested in such a book as *Clinical Sonnets*, but seldom does his genius as a poet preempt his role as psychiatrist. When it does, one has the startled feeling of a fish which has warily swum around an assortment of limp worms and

flashy lures, and grabbing a true minnow, finds himself deep hooked and rising willy nilly and unexpectedly out of his watery indifference into an excruciating atmosphere which can be endured only if prosaic gills can be traded for poetic lungs.

I am aware that this fishy analogy was in all probability suggested to me as a perversion of Moore's sonnet "With Little Bait," which is interestingly enough the penultimate poem "Of Prophecy" in his book *M*. Having borne witness to his prowess, I cannot object to this bragging which he does as a metaphysical angler, but being something of a fisherman as well as a fish, I cannot help observing, regardless of whether his fish symbolize his poetic imagery or the readers whom he catches, what a mess his tackle box is in! He is the after-work sportsman who seldom has time, in his haste to wet a line, to observe the sacred rites which are dear to the heart of the ritualist of fishing. And at all costs he will catch fish; apparently he does not care what variety so long as he is pulling them in.

Let's take an example of each kind of thing I am talking about in Moore's work: (1) the creative imitation and (2) the mere copy of things observed. The two pieces—"The Contents of Waste Baskets" and "Something Slammed the Door To"—face each other on pages 324 and 325 in the book *M*. Both of them deal with simple observations, which seem to have overtones for the poet, and may have for the reader as well. One of them never germinated in the poetic process of the unconscious about which Coleridge speculated. One of them did germinate, and grew; how far it grew I shall leave to the reader to decide, but I hope I need not have to designate which of the two pieces I am talking about. There is no point to any discussion of what is and what is not poetry unless we are intuitively agreed about it.

Who considers the contents of waste baskets  
Of negligible or supernumerary worth?  
Who, reaching into one, would bring forth  
Envelopes (opened) or sheets of crumpled paper  
That were the letters the envelopes contained?

House-maids? No, they think of their lovers' eyes  
As they empty waste baskets. The janitor? No.  
As he empties waste baskets at his tasks,  
He has a dream of steak and beer in the evening.

Still men and women go about their work  
Filling and emptying waste baskets. Then the rats?  
Perhaps; I doubt it; rats do not value waste baskets  
Unless they happen to possess, contain,  
Apple peels, morsels of stale candy, crumbs of bread.

It was the wind, nothing but the wind  
That closed the door; return, breath, to the bosom,  
Go to sleep again, simply, do not start,  
Leave that to the red and eager heart—  
Move on rhythmically, it was only the wind.

True, the hinge creaked, true, the door swung to,  
True, the lock snapped, and then all was still.  
But that was only the pressure of the wind,  
The gentle wind that closed the door to the room  
You came out of; it—was only the wind  
You left behind you, that was only the wind—

Silence now, be silent, you have trudged  
Many a mile to come to this, and drudged  
Many an hour to gain this: be still now,  
Breath and heart, oh, it was nothing, be still. . . .

These two sonnets fairly represent the consistent achievement of Moore. They are neither the best nor the worst, but average as observation and average as diction, yet the one was most certainly put together, while the other one grew, in such a fusion of external with internal as Coleridge was talking about, in a creative imitation of nature rather than a mere copying of it.

I am aware that "The Contents of Wastebaskets" appeals to Mr. Henry W. Wells as one of "Moore's flirtations with surrealistic



verse, where an ever-so-faint suspicion of symbolic meaning glimmers behind a foreground aggressively meaningless or nonsensical," in which Mr. Wells understands the contents of wastebaskets to symbolize "valuable truth looked upon by man's uncritical and unimaginative eye as unpromising refuse . . . man's true history and inquiring mind (possibly even Moore's poetry) which is relegated to the scrap-heaps as unworthy of serious attention." (*Poet and Psychiatrist*, 283-284). It is my belief that this interpretation reveals Mr. Wells' agility to extricate symbols more than it justifies Moore's poetic practice of "surrealistic verse." I have never been entirely sure what "surrealistic" means; if I do understand the term, however, I should have no objection to Mr. Wells applying it likewise to "Something Slammed the Door To," and if he did so, then I should repeat, here is an example of "surrealistic poetry" as opposed to "surrealistic verse."

I am sure that Moore is himself analytically aware of this hit or miss quality in his work, for he has drawn the picture in the sonnet "Part Of Him Was Artist, Part Was Artisan." The most interesting thing about this piece is what it does not include. The artist-artisan is represented as producing an immense variety of imitations of nature, but there is no indication that he is ever aware of anything but the superficial difference between the materials "clay glazed and baked" and "elephant bone," the difference of "size and shape," the difference between creations with "titles" and those which are "nameless," and the difference between "cloths" and "pottery" as an end product. He is aware of the fact that he is so carried away by his weaving that, to paraphrase Browning, his grasp exceeds his reach, so to speak. But he is nowhere presented as an artist aware of the difference between the creative imitation and the copy. He achieves both, if we may believe the poem's title, though in what relative proportions we do not learn.

Now, when I have said that Moore is analytically aware of this, I meant to imply that he is aware of it as an artistic problem, not wholly unrelated to himself as artist, and certainly applicable in some degree to every poet who ever wrote a line. It is characteristic of Moore, however, that he gives not only an oblique presentation of his problem in this sonnet, as well as in others, but frankly

admits in his prefaces that his poems are "experimental" and "represent quick impressionistic efforts" (*Clinical Sonnets*) that they are "*Bastard Sonnets . . . born out of wedlock*" (*Illegitimate Sonnets*), and are "a by-product of my daily activity" for which he "would prescribe a casual, conversational reading." (*From a Psychiatrist's Notebook*). In short, he vends his wares with a *caveat emptor*, so far as their being poetry goes. This we may approve as honest tradesmanship, but what shall we say when he implies that the essential poetry of the genuine poems is an "intrusion?"

Recurring to Coleridge's phrase about the conscious being "so impressed on the unconscious as to appear in it," let us note what Moore has to say about what is for him, apparently, the reverse of this process: "I find it difficult at times to separate realism from phantasy because symbols, despite my best intentions, often manage to get themselves into a poem. This intrusion of symbolism is especially noticeable in poems which, although stimulated by the external world of things seen and felt, seem to spring also from the inner world of feeling—sometimes from the subconscious." (*From a Psychiatrist's Notebook*). No, I do not discount Moore's humor at any time; perhaps he is being humorous here, but even so, with what? One must love one's bastard children no doubt, given the Olympian urge of Charles II to "scatter his maker's image through the land" physically, or Moore's titanic impulse to create bastard sonnets by the thousand. But when the perennial stud becomes the judge of his progeny and by implication does not recognize those faces which carry the true image of the-one-without-a-name, but dubs them "intrusions," we come face to face with the penalty of virility. It's a wise father that knows his own child, certainly, but any poet should know what a physician cannot avoid—the fact that there are children of light mingled among the criminals, idiots, and monsters who make up the "outer fringe" of society which at dead center is an undistinguished mass of commonplace but lovable citizens.

How flat is flat, poetically speaking? Moore's latest book, *The Hill of Venus*, furnishes something near the absolute of flatness in the sonnet "There is Money in Pornography." On the other hand, in a few poems, we find that the poet in Moore can still treat the

theme of sex with genuine imagination. The best poetry in the book, unfortunately, seems to have "intruded" itself into reality in spite of Dr. Moore's best intentions, if we accept him at his word quoted above, but it has never quite assimilated the reality, nor been assimilated by it. Hence the anomaly of some excellent poetry in poems which lack composition. For example, "All Telephones In This Area Cost Ten Cents/And You Can Get a Lot of Love for a Dime":

In the test tube of untried reality  
The vermiform appendix of a blind date;  
Such words refer to actuality,  
Not abstraction, careless or sedate  
Upon a dais, or a marble throne,  
Seated, like a statue in the park  
Where girls go out to use the telephone  
Standing in a kiosk in the dark  
That brings the hour, long awaited, for  
The soldier or the sailor home from war;  
Begun with coins, then the dial tone,  
Soon an answer: "Yes, I am alone  
The family is out; you may come over,"  
The quick communication of the lover.

I hope I have not pursued Coleridge's observation beyond the point of no return, for I wanted it, not as a means of illustrating that Moore is not a poet, nor even that he is a bad poet, but rather that he is at times a fine poet indeed. He is one of the few modern poets who have written convincing poetry (to me at least) of love.

In writing love poetry one lays himself open to more than literary criticism; the ridicule that centers on self can never be far removed from either the poet who writes of love, or the poet who reads of love, because the lover's only self defense in love is ridicule. The more sacred the rite and creed, and the greater the immolation of martyrdom, the more ridiculous are the symbols and the language to the eyes and ears of the skeptic self, yearning for martyrdom but unconvinced of its necessity.

Moore's love poetry displays this ambivalence constantly, most fey when most serious, and most pious when most unbelieving. Of many illustrations of this I may cite two: "Itinerary of Unwanted Song," in which the result is sustained poetry of a fine though light quality, and "Take this," in which the result is orthodox love-piety of a rather low order unsustained by poetic belief after the fourth line.

It is perhaps great pity, but true, that frequently the best poetry about love which he writes is such ironical, skeptical, but highly charged lines as "Old Lover's Claim" or "Will You Ever Pardon Me My Mistakes?" which record the disappointments and the failures of human love. The latter of these is about as close to perfection as Moore gets, except in such a poem as "Her Largesse," one of his early *Fugitive* pieces, for which I have searched his later work in vain to find an equal. Reprinted in several of his later volumes, it always stands up as one of the best in the book, as do in fact several others of his early *Fugitive* poems:

The kingliest parts of him belonged to her.

He'd given them to her once when she was ill,  
Lamely, perhaps, and somewhat against his will.

But now she held them closely like a fur  
Robe about her when the winds beat snow  
Against her figure that had far to go  
Over a road over a hill so steep  
Those who reached its end could only sleep;

His long square forehead and his long-lidded eyes,  
She held them tightly as a jockey holds  
The reins wrapped over his knuckles in double folds  
When the wind has beaten his cap down in his face  
And this is perhaps the end of his last race  
And to win it would be the key to paradise.

About religion in its essence Moore has written some of the finest poems ever written by a skeptic, which means in my way of putting it, the best religious poetry, for the only conviction in words

rings as an echo of doubt. The wish is father to the thought even if not to the belief in such a poem as "His Voice Is Like A Singing Tree."

He spoke, and I climbed up into His Voice like a tree  
I could not fall out of, and there I slept.  
Over my head the leaves, His sweet words, kept  
Up a gentle murmur; at times they wept  
Honey-like, and let fall great honeyed tears  
To beat upon my drowsy-sweetened ears  
That listened hungrily to the harmony  
Of His sweet words, His tears and my poor fears.

Where should I have been? No other place,  
Unless I were a mote to rest on His face!  
Hidden in the foliage of His towering voice,  
I could hear each cell that was part of me rejoice  
With the greeting cry that angels are heard to use  
When they leap to wipe Heaven's dust from His shoes.

As an act of pure imagination this is Moore at his best, but among the numerous poems in which he traces his (and that of most of us who would, if we could, believe) tragic (if it isn't I don't know what is) lack of personal acquaintance with deity, the poem "And If I Would I Know Not Where To Hide Me" is an excellent example of what I have referred to, perhaps too humorously, as his "incidentalism." It is also an example of Moore's success with verse in which no symbols "intrude," because they are the web of the experience itself, and in which flat diction is well adapted to a poetic purpose:

From my needs (of something to worship) that sit beside me  
(When I travel alone—on railway trains)  
And talk to those who populate inside me,  
And all of us twiddle our thumbs and cudgel our brains  
In brown studies as the world rolls by,  
As the rails click and telephone poles flit by  
And wires and fences rise and fall in the sky

And engines roar and rush incessantly—  
 And my needs of something to worship that run beside me  
 (When tired of sitting they run, and *vice versa*),  
 That treat me as a cashier or a bursar,  
 Saying: "Here is a penny!" or "Give us one  
 For God or the deity behind the sun!"  
 —Tragically and terribly they chide me.

Something should be said about the relationship of psychiatry and poetry in Moore's work. In fact, I wonder if psychiatry is not responsible more often than not for what I suspect as being charlatanry in his work, responsible, that is, because it has sophisticated the poet's necessary simple faith in the creative act itself. It is possible for a physician-psychiatrist to adopt in all sincerity the point-of-view of the relativist, skeptic, experimentalist, who proceeds empirically, but when the poet proceeds thus as a regular method, he constantly verges on the meretricious. Thus, the several hundred verses which obviously grow out of Moore's psychiatric practice, are frequently marked by deep understanding of human nature, by sympathy, by humor, by common sense; many are memorable sketches drawn in language that is at the least acceptable and at the best practiced artisanry. I enjoyed reading them the first time, I have enjoyed reading them the second time, and I shall remember many of them for a long time. "She told me she had become a vaginal ear," "He said he was in a mood for angels but he never got to see them after all," "Locked in a prison with an invisible key," "He suffered from creative mentality," "He had something he wanted to give away," and others among the *Clinical Sonnets* are such good psychiatry that we may fail to appreciate their art, much as we make a purchase of a ten-cents-store gadget for its usefulness and never note its design, frequently as superior in its way as anything accomplished by Praxiteles. And yet they are not poetry in the true sense that much, fortunately, of Moore's work is. The knowledge of a psychiatrist can produce, at its best perhaps, the sonnet "You Have Seen Them," but only the knowledge of the poet can produce "Her Largesse."

To write thus is not learned, although it cannot be written



without learning. What one learns as a psychiatrist or as a poet, may be simply how to pretend to know and glibly to verbalize with apparent conviction, as Moore has so well depicted in "Pupil to Master." But one cannot learn from a teacher what the teacher does not know so well as one knows himself, and this is what Moore discovers in such poems as "Her Largesse" or "Lust and Silence," which no amount of psychiatry or literary technique can account for. That he does not discover his vein of poetry more often may, or may not be, entirely his fault. I am inclined to believe that, considering the age in which he lives, he has done better than his readers, and certainly better than his non-readers, deserve. I, for one, am inclined to accept at face value Moore's poetic confession that, in his own way,

No one has tried harder than I have tried  
To catch the gleaming images that died: . . .

For any student of the more than 2,000 published sonnets of the estimated more than 100,000 filed away in Moore's cabinets, the poet's attitude toward his compulsive activity as a writer, and toward the creations which it has produced, is intriguing in its ambivalence. Although he tries to tell himself that it is just as natural and normal as a bowel movement and that it should be accomplished with no more aplomb and accepted without unnecessary fanfare, nevertheless, Moore both loves and hates the act of writing and the verses which it produces. This fact is borne out not merely by his prose comments on his works, but also by numerous poems which deal with his compulsion, such as "Weary of My Dissonance" and "Do It, Make It, Be It." And yet, undoubtedly and humorously, the most horrible thought of all, possible only in a bad dream, is that there must ultimately come an end to such potency—a thought expressed in "Plentiful? I?":

I realized I was no more plentiful.  
I was asleep in the port of coldest morning  
When suddenly "How plentiful you are!"  
Burst like the fragments of a shattered star.

It fell on my shoulders like the 4th of July,  
 Incandescent its sheen, iridescent I.  
 People complained: I wonder where we are?  
 This is unusual! So incorrigible!  
 These fragments of an energy that bursts  
 Ranging from the passable to worst.

But then I listened for the morning tones  
 Of bells, I heard some of the faintest ones

But ill they boded when there came a lull  
 That taught me I was no more plentiful!

After such knowledge, can one complain of the valley river, often muddy and full of debris, that it is not a clear stream welling thinly but consistently pure from the mountain side?

If Coleridge's opinion is valid that, "one character belongs to all true poets, that they write from a principle within, not originating in anything without," then most of Moore's variety, topicality, and apparent lack of commitment would seem to indicate that most of what he writes is merely something that accumulated. One can read all of Moore and never feel that one knows this poet as one knows Wordsworth, or T. S. Eliot (or Edgar Guest, for that matter), for Moore can get involved in almost any kind of game without showing his hand but one card at a time, and leaving his reader guessing what is left yet to play and suspecting that there may be less (or more) in it than the poet is willing for us (or himself) to know at this stage of the game. Thus there are two (he has admitted to *Six*, as I am aware) sides to Moore the poet. One is completely outgiving and the other extremely inholding. He has stated the case himself in the sonnet "I—Me—Je—Ego—Wo, Etc., Etc."

In one area I do not perform  
 Very well; I am below the norm.  
 It is in *the true giving of myself*;  
 Of course, I give a lot and try to give  
 Even more, but somehow I do not.  
 I am a cryptic volume on a shelf;

Few open me; few ever take me down  
To read and fondle; I am isolate;  
Self-containment is my tragic fate. . . .

His "true giving of himself," where is it? Although I feel sure that some of Merrill Moore's sonnets will be around a long time, if I were asked to select the ten which would be my choice for posterity, I should much prefer to select a hundred, which is an indication both of my liking for them and of my feeling that I would be much safer if I could choose a hundred, because there are few if any perfect poems among them, and yet there are dozens which, were they only perfect, or even more nearly perfect, would do more for our day than Tennyson's perfect best (which was, after all, in its day, perfect best) ever did for his.

But considering all, it is as well  
That art rejects, is rejected, and Time anoints.

I had chosen these two lines as epigraph to my article before the writing of it began, in order to illustrate finally the incertitude of Moore's poetic creed and ceremony, and to show how far his scientific relativism and empiricism has detached him from belief in his own truth. The fallacy that "Time anoints" is pure myth of the rationalistic, skeptical, scientific variety so characteristic of our era. To set the record straight, it was not Time that anointed Shakespeare and Wordsworth, but Ben Jonson and Coleridge, and in a smaller way the host of believers in poetic truth who have accepted with periodic modifications of dogma, the original verdict of those high priests of literary art. Whether William Carlos Williams, Louis Untermeyer, Dudley Fitts, or, originally and most felicitously, John Crowe Ransom should be credited as being the most authoritative "anointer" of Moore, the fact will remain.

# The Uses of Poetry

LAWRENCE LIPTON

POETRY has always had many uses. It has cast ritual spells, enchanted and disenchanted princesses, riddled and unriddled mysteries. Laws have been couched in verse, official reports and even fiscal budgets, and one poet-enchanter is recounted in the *Kalevala* as having sung his opponent right down into a bog up to his mouth in a sorcery contest till he cried uncle, a use that has been revived in our time in the versified singing commercials. It has been used, and is still used, as religious liturgy, as sexual seduction, as a form of entertainment, and a snap course for college credits.

Today, when the new sonic media of mass communication, radio, television, phonograph recordings, and public poetry readings, offer at least an opportunity of making poetry once more a flourishing social art, it might be pertinent to recall some of its more serious uses. These are definable, I think, in four main categories: poetry as a private, psychological therapy; a psycho-social therapy; a political philosophy, *i.e.* a theory of history; and a *mythos*, *i.e.* a theory of man's origin and destiny and his place in the universe, which can be either religious or scientific or an attempted synthesis of both.

The use of poetry as a private psychological therapy—call it abreaction, individuation, self-knowledge, personal salvation, it comes to the same thing—may best be illustrated by such a clinical, one might almost say pathological, example as the Dada movement which began in Zurich in 1916 and quickly spread to Paris where it became the basis of Surrealism. Its manifestoes and the pretended madness of its clowning public demonstrations are widely recorded, as is its deliberate “derangement of the senses,” but its psychological and literary motivations are not so well remembered today. The aim was a new-found wholeness of the psyche by first responding

"utterly but *successively* to the contradictory appeals of the sensitivity" (Andre Berg), by "unaccustomed caresses, touching the soul at points where it has not been touched before, shaking it and stirring it with new griefs and happy hazards" (Tristan Tzara), and thus "to shape the personal sensation through the aid of a blazing collusion of rare words—not often, eh, what?" (Jacques Vache). The creative act as autovivisection without ether, and not without some fear of the consequences. For, as Robert Honnert confessed, "The more I survey the evidence to the effect that I am a multiple being, the more I am devoured by an inextinguishable desire for unity. . . . I am afraid of being a crumbling phenomenon." The poets who composed the word-forms that went with such ritual dramas of private psychological therapy as the rites of healing and dying would have understood what Jacques Vache meant by shaping the personal sensation through the aid of "a blazing collusion of rare words." And any poet can say amen to his "not often, eh, what?"

The aim was wholeness, just as the ultimate aim of all well-aimed and significant destructions is rebuilding. In terms of ritual therapy, through death to rebirth. He who would save his life must lose it, dying to the self in order to achieve an integration of the conscious with the unconscious. This, in its simplest, most fundamental form, is the function of all poetry which aims at providing a private psychological therapy.

The poetry of self-exploration can be documented from all the literatures of the world, from the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *T'ai I Chin Hua Tsung Chih* (*The Secret of the Golden Flower*), the sacred drama of Eleusis, fragments of which can be glimpsed in Plato and other Greek sources, and from both the devotional and the demoniacal literature of the Middle Ages—"How thin a line/Divides demonic from divine!" and, one might add, the erotic from the subliminal.

"In thine isle, O venus, I found only upthrust  
A Calvary symbol whereon mine Image hung.  
—Give me, Lord God! to look upon that dung,  
My body and my heart, without disgust!"

wrote Baudelaire, on which J. M. Bernstein has commented, "This mixture of love and hate, of attraction and repulsion; this antithesis of the sublime and the mean . . . good and evil, heaven and hell, mark Baudelaire . . . a divided man . . . striving to fuse these conflicting elements into a poetic synthesis," and adding, "This ambivalence is one of the familiar hallmarks of the poet in our century."

At midcentury the poetry of private therapy remains mostly French. From Baudelaire and Rimbaud to Breton, Eluard, Cocteau, Perse, Michaux, Desnos, Prevert and Emmanuel it is one long Season in Hell. One recalls the words of the *Theologia Germanica*, "Nothing burns in hell but the self." It is not until the self has been purged of its conflicts that the poet is ready for *la littérature engagée*, whether it be commitment to a political philosophy or a psycho-social therapy. It is an agonizing discipline, this self-dissection, and most of its practitioners never get beyond the secret drama of the self. For them the poem remains what Dylan Thomas called it, the momentary peace that is a poem—Thomas who was one of the few English poets to take this dangerous road and whom the French poets immediately recognized as one of their company. Thomas who answered the question, What is the use of poetry? with, "Poetry is useful to me for one reason: it is the record of my individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light," and "is, or should be, useful to others for its individual recording of that same struggle with which they are necessarily acquainted."

When we come to the psycho-social uses of poetry we find little to cite in French literature whereas in England, and notably in Germany, the social muse tends to take political form. Only Whitman's sexual mystique, not his social mystique, influenced French poetry, and his influence in England and Germany has been nil. Whitman's own influences in this respect were, as is well known, the Hebrew prophets, and it is to the Bible that we must go for the earliest known sources of psycho-social poetry. When we look for it in the modern poetry of England and the United States we are forced to speak of the *early* Eliot, the *early* Yeats, the *early* Lawrence, etc. All of them pursued psycho-social solutions only just



so long, so far. Yeats settled for a mystique of history instead, trying, in his own words, "to substitute for Biblical or mythological figures, historical movements and actual men and women." (Pound later erected a rambling jerry-built structure on the same foundation.) Eliot settled for a Thirteenth (some say Eleventh) Century version of Christian theology dressed up with some mystical trimmings from John of the Cross which bear as much relation to *ex cathedra* doctrine as Sufi mysticism bears to the Aga Kahn or the once Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Just the same it has sparked some church-joining among intellectual playboys (and girls) and a few conversions among young poets fresh from English Lit and the New Criticism. Most of the younger poets of England and the United States have been content to learn something of their craft from Eliot and leave his mythos alone. As for Lawrence, he became so enraptured with "primitive" rite that he never found his way back into the Twentieth Century.

What makes the psycho-social function so difficult for poets in our time is the fact that it cannot be combined, as it was before the Renaissance, with any ready-made system of social sanctions. A community that rests on no psychologically effective rite of initiation is not a community. It is only a quantitative, a statistical collective. All the ready-made church-administered social rites fail the poet today because they are based on an outmoded God-Father-King *mythos* which no longer commands more than lip service, even among its religious and political priests. (The present attempt in the United States to resurrect it as a God-Father-President *mythos* is as artificial as it is reactionary.) Whitman's most significant contribution was not his free verse but his democratic social *mythos*. Not only was it premature, lacking a democratic economic foundation, but it was psychologically naïve. Most of the world's jobs are back-breaking or boring and nothing except ritual sacramentalization has ever given dignity to labor, and that only for brief periods—during the honeymoon of some new communal religion like Essenism, or in our own time the first period of Russian communism. Perhaps automation is "that day" which Zechariah prophesied when the horses' bells and the cooking pots will be holy (Zech. 14:20). If so, it will be the psycho-social poet who will

provide the rite. The poet "creates sacramental relationships," says Kenneth Rexroth, but it is not sacramentalized atom-powered automatic machines he has in mind, it is sacramentalized human relations. The poet's psycho-social function is to provide word-forms for such a sacramentalized society. It is still, as it was for Zechariah, a vision of the future, but the time for such a poetry is always Now. In this sense Whitman was not premature, only prophetic, just as Rexroth's *Community of Lovers* is prophetic. It can exist today only in miniature pilot models of two, or a few, like the mystical communities of Chassidism described (idealized would probably be more accurate) by Martin Buber, and Eric Gutkind in *The Absolute Collective*. Rexroth names Buber as an influence, and Henry Miller names Gutkind. If the poet cannot accept any contemporary religion or prophesy a new sacramentalized society he can, if he is socially oriented, function as a political poet.

The political use of poetry is to arouse men to a sense of their social-economic condition, spur them to action ("the trumpets which sing to battle") whether it be violent revolution or non-violent resistance, to take the side of the oppressed against the oppressor, the accused against the accuser, to make the exploited aware of their rights as human beings and the potential strength they possess to obtain those rights, to remind the ruler of his obligations to the ruled and convict him of guilt if he fails in his obligation. It is the poet acting in his rôle of attorney for the defense and, when justice breaks down, the rôle of judge as well.

What distinguishes the political poet from the politician is that the poet does not regard the political solution as final, or an end in itself. The end is a community, not a collective. That is why he usually finds it necessary, sooner or later, to disaffiliate himself not only from the corrupt and dying social institutions but from parties as well. A party is not a community; it is only a collective arrayed against another collective. The political poet may make common cause with the most progressive parties of his time but his only permanent commitment is to the community of the future, a vision which he keeps intact through all the ups and downs of the struggle and all the changes in party lines. He is "the little man

with the blueprints" in Earl Robinson's *Tower of Babel* cantata. It may be a Divine Plan revealed to the prophet-poet by a God of History, as in Isaiah's rhapsody of Zion Redeemed, a vision of the world's peoples finally brought into brotherly harmony through a non-violent spiritual revolution. It may be a blueprint in reverse, a kind of 1984 or *Brave New World* like Plato's *Republic*, which banishes the poet himself as a subverter of the state religion, i.e. the religion of statism. It may be the Essenic-Christian Community of the Holy Ones; or Augustine's complete rejection of political justice, the *polis* itself, despair of all mortal means and ends, and the vision of a City of God in place of the City of Satan. Again it may be Dante's picture of the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of both church and state, "the last age of the world," and salvation through the acceptance of God's will in place of man's will. Or Shakespeare's balance of mercy and justice enthroned in the hearts of godlike kings. Or Whitman's vision of a democracy of godlike men. Or Pablo Neruda's song of the American hemisphere reconstructed in the image of Lincoln and Whitman. Or Mayakovsky: "Our weapons are our song . . . I want the pen to be equal to the bayonet . . . we've climbed over the top; in the Union of Republics the appreciation of poetry has surpassed the prewar level," crying, "I am not a poet but first of all a man who has put his pen at the service of the present hour, the immediate actuality . . . the Soviet government and the Party"—and, three years later, blowing his brains out. But always it is a theory of history, proclaimed or implied, a judgment on the present and a vision of the future.

Uncontrolled indignation is the technical hazard of the political poet, just as sentimentalism is the technical hazard of the psychosocial poet and self pity the hazard of the self exploratory poet.

Of the four categories I have suggested, the mythopoetic is perhaps the most fundamental. It attempts to answer the questions, What am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Identity, purpose, destiny. These elements are present in myth from the beginning. And from the start they took a three-fold form, the Quest: a setting out, a confrontation of perils, and a destination. Perhaps they were danced and/or painted before they were spoken,

that question may never be settled; but when they did take the form of language it was a language of symbols, based in the first place, I suspect, on the sacred icons and the ritual animal masks. Hence it was a language of metaphor, which is by definition that which is like to or stands in place of.

All the formal literary works which have survived in writing are centuries, perhaps millenniums, removed from these beginnings, but all display traces at least of the original framework of the Quest. The Hero, the stations of his Quest, and a destination. The Homeric poems have all three, and the Attic drama took them over, employing as well a similar framework borrowed from the mystery plays. The Hebrew myth material survives only in such narrative reworkings of ritual drama as the Jonah story, the circumcision, iconoclast and human/animal sacrifice stories of the Abrahamic cycle, and the two creation stories, the Garden of Eden and The Flood. In the human psyche a thousand years are as one day. The archetypal figures and the three-act Quest are psychologically just as powerful today as they ever were, and therefore fit for poetic metaphor. But they must be reclothed from time to time. Our age is one of those times.

Dante clothed them in Christian dress, quite successfully. By Milton's time the Christian wardrobe was wearing thin. Milton found it necessary to take note of some Rationalist objections to it, and "justify the ways of God to Man." His Hero was not so much God as Satan, a figure that Goethe further rationalized a hundred years later in Mephistopheles. Blake tried to recreate the ancient archetypes in a private mythology, betraying his misunderstanding of the origin and growth of myth. Not till the present century was there any attempt to come to grips with the problem of myth in modern dress. Yeats tried "to substitute for Biblical and mythological figures, historical movements and actual men and women," which makes it political poetry; besides, so far as "dress" is concerned, his metaphor remained traditional. Pound's *Cantos*, despite his attempt to dress them up as epic myth—the Descent into Hades and a kind of Metamorphosis (like Ovid's, he told Yeats)—remain political poetry, too; and the "structure like a Bach fugue," which he once claimed for it, does not make it myth or epic, whatever

else may be claimed for it.

It was Joyce who set the fashion, in our time, of borrowing "structures" from epic literature, when he went back to the *Odyssey*—itself a late and badly garbled reworking of a number of remotely related ritual dramas—for the framework of his *Ulysses*. For *Finnegans Wake* he anthropomorphized a number of philosophical and scientific systems in figures which roughly correspond to Freud, Lévy-Bruhl, Bruno and Vico, who seem to add up collectively into a Hero who might be Everyman. By "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," he managed to present "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," to quote T. S. Eliot's comment on Joyce. It may be that his Hero knows, finally, who he is, and perhaps even why he is here, but nowhere do I find any indication that he knows where he is going. Lacking Destination, the classical mytho-poetic pattern is not complete. It may well be, as many are already saying, that philosophically Joyce is the end of something rather than the beginning of anything—except such poetic devices as "stream of consciousness" writing and portmanteau words. (I am taking for granted that my readers are under no misapprehension about Joyce's books being "novels" or a "new kind of prose" as they are still labeled in the schools and libraries.)

At about the same time Hart Crane was attempting to construct an American *mythos* by putting "positive and glowing spiritual content into machinery," that is, using scientific terms and concepts as metaphor. His two main influences, Whitman and the French symbolists, gave him the basis of a personal therapy and a social orientation, but unable to find or unwilling to accept any model for his mythos he invented his own. It is less ambitious than Eliot's or Pound's but it would not surprise me if it proves in time to have been the more promising one, so far as influence on future poetry is concerned. "When," as Waldo Frank puts it, "the collectivist era has done its work—the abolition of economic classes and of animal want—men will turn, as only the privileged of the past could ever turn, toward the discovery of Man." For Crane's was a mystique of Man, and the mysteries of science were his metaphysics. By comparison, Eliot is reactionary, in style and content.



Eliot, with the same intent which he imputed to Joyce, found a suitable framework for *The Waste Land* in a ritual drama of the death and rebirth cycle. But he clothed it not so much in a new metaphorology as in quotations and allusions culled from world literature. The result is itself "a heap of broken images" rather than a new and revivifying *mythos*. Others have followed him in like attempts, but he himself quickly abandoned it for the church confessional. What began as a prophetic Song of Doom and Redemption (the latter more Hindu than Christian) ended up as a liturgy much of which could have come—and in some passages did—out of the devotional poetry of the Middle Ages. Today it passes for new and nonconformist chiefly in conservative circles where its theology is dimly recognized as familiar despite its verbal difficulties, and in more liberal circles where its theology is overlooked—for the sake of "art"—and its social and political implications have so far escaped close examination.

My own view is that neither Crane nor Eliot went far enough back for his sources nor far enough forward for his vision of the future. Nothing will do but to cut back to the very root of mythopoiesis, a personally experienced sense of the numinous. We must ask all the old questions again, freshly, with an almost primitive naïveté, as Walt Whitman asked them: "What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?" and see ourselves as he saw himself, "no less than the journey-work of the stars." His democratic social mystique may have been historically premature and his social psychology too simple, but his mythopoiesis was sounder than that of any poet who has followed him. It had in it more of the elements out of which the mythos of the future will be made. The finished work lies in the future, but the time to be working at it is always and forever Now. The new is born within the matrix of the old and finally sheds the old as a snake casts its skin.

These are, I think, the principle uses of poetry in our time. Perhaps, as poetry once more finds its proper function in society as a living, spoken art, the present interest in techniques and explications will diminish to something like their proper proportions, and there will be room in criticism once more for considerations of use and purpose.



## Editorial Notes

(continued from inside front cover)  
laud someone to high heaven as a true friend of many years, and a week later he would denounce him in terms fit only for a segregationist agitator. He wrote some lovely lyrics about women—I incline to think these will keep his memory green for a long time—but in conversation at cocktail time he would talk about women, some of them friends of long standing, with the sharp tongue of a fishmonger.

"And yet, even when he was his most malicious, he would end his tirade with a smile all over his face—like that of a little boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar—and the smile seemed to say, 'Good, eh? Of course, I didn't mean it literally, I simply think the phrase is rather fetching, and I'm sure you'll forgive me for whatever I've done to damage anybody's reputation.' . . .

"The last time we saw him—at Dr. Decker's home in New York—in what glorious form he was! He talked and talked and his eyes twinkled and his index finger punctuated every mischievous phrase, as when, time and again, he called an eminent literary lady 'rancid and unpleasant'. . . then decided to dispose of her merely with 'rancid'. . . and he let us know that this and that man were humbugs (*humbug* was a favorite

word)—but he also spoke of Yeats and of Shaw and of AE and of Lord Dunsany with affection . . . and then he stood up, erect, this seventy-nine-year-old man, one day before he was stricken, and recited poem after poem. I can still hear the roll of his voice and I can still see the young and gay and grandly irresponsible gleam in his eyes and also that index finger pointing at us and all New York and at the whole world. . . .

"It was a session that Dr. Decker and I will not forget. And we shall also not forget his generosity to us. Responding to our invitation to contribute to *The Literary Review*, he gave us what was probably the very last poem he wrote—'Where,' which opens Volume I, Number 1—and he gave us what were probably his last story and his last essay, and a batch of poems, all gracing this issue of the *Review*. Even the impish sketch of himself he brought us—and a few hours afterward, alas, he collapsed on the streets of New York and three days later he was gone.

"The following morning we received a letter from Dr. Gogarty postmarked Sunday evening—hours after he had died. Who mailed the letter still remains a mystery. The last of the several poems in the envelope is published on page 132. It is entitled 'His Epitaph'."

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